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Robert Hughes on Julian Schnabel

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WASHINGTON, D.C. — DECEMBER 14, 1987

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4 **CORRESPONDENCE** ..... Meese's company, Teamsters' defense, &c.

7 **THE EDITORS** ..... THE BOOK ON IRANAMOK
The final report of the Iran-*contra* committee.
NOTEBOOK
Rockefellers and *glasnost* &c.

8 **CHARLES PAUL FREUND** ..... THE ZEITGEIST CHECKLIST

10 **FRED BARNES** ..... WHITE HOUSE WATCH: BOMBSHELLS
A few dramatic ideas bouncing around to save the Reagan presidency.

12 **HAL S. SCOTT** ..... THE PRESS: BETRAYAL
The nightmare of being misquoted by the *New York Times*.

13 **JOHN J. PITNEY JR.** ..... NEO-GEPHARDT
What a difference six years makes.

14 **ROBERT WRIGHT** ..... ALCOHOL AND FREE WILL
A Supreme Court case this month reopens the question whether alcoholism is a disease. The trouble with this Alcoholics Anonymous orthodoxy is that there is no end to it.

17 **ROBERT LEIKEN** ..... NICARAGUA CLIFFHANGER
The Arias plan has proven to be an unexpectedly strong lever for democratization in Nicaragua. Will the Democrats now let Ortega off the hook?

22 **STANLEY KAUFFMANN** ..... ON FILMS: CHINESE TAKEOUT; STAR TREK
Bertolucci's *The Last Emperor* is boring; *Nuts* is scraggly, but Barbra Streisand *acts*.

24 **ROBERT HUGHES** ..... THE ARTIST AS ENTREPRENEUR
How Julian Schnabel became the celebrity starlet of the art world without being able to draw.

34 **DENIS DONOGHUE** ..... LANGUAGE AND LOSS
The Penguin Book of Modern Yiddish Verse
edited by Irving Howe, Ruth R. Wisse, and Khone Shmeruk

38 **ANN HULBERT** ..... MAGGIEMARCH
The Radiant Way by Margaret Drabble
Cuts by Malcolm Bradbury

44 **RICHARD HOLBROOKE** ..... CARPE DIEM
A Death in November by Ellen J. Hammer

47 **STANISLAW BARANCZAK** ..... PRAYING AND PLAYING
The Collected Plays and Writings on Theater
by Karol Wojtyla
translated by Boleslaw Taborski

48 **NICHOLAS CHRISTOPHER** ..... POEM *Circe Revisited*

50 **WASHINGTON DIARIST** ..... WAIT FOR THE BEEP

COVER by Sarah Drews Walton for THE NEW REPUBLIC. Article on page 24. TRB From Washington will return next week.

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MEESE'S COMPANY

To the editors:

While THE NEW REPUBLIC misstates the facts of record, it remains the case that Attorney General Edwin Meese III has no ties to Wedtech, has never interceded in the contract procurement process on Wedtech's behalf, and has received no personal gain or benefit whatsoever (either directly or indirectly) from Wedtech, its officials, or any of its activities ("Resign, Ed Meese," November 9). TNR tries to tar the attorney general by suggesting—again erroneously—that he is the subject of a separate independent counsel investigation into the Iran-*contra* affair. The truth is that he has never been a target of that investigation. He was, instead, instrumental to the solution, launching a fact inquiry that uncovered the essential story in one weekend. To call for Mr. Meese's resignation in such circumstances underscores how far out of touch TNR actually is with reality. Few public servants who have passed through Washington in the last two centuries have been as "squeeky clean" as Ed Meese.

WILLIAM BRADFORD REYNOLDS
Assistant Attorney General and Counselor to the Attorney General
Washington, D.C.

To the editors:

All I have to say about your editorial on Attorney General Edwin Meese's shortcomings is: picky, picky, picky. How can we expect to attract good people to government service if we require them to be honorable and scrupulous. After all, people the likes of Elliot Richardson, George Marshall, Dwight Eisenhower, Frances Perkins, Cyrus Vance, Robert McNamara, James Baker, Malcolm Baldrige, Elizabeth Dole, Harold Brown, Dean Rusk, Jacob Javits, Clark Clifford, Ed Muskie, Gerald Ford, Walter Mondale, Tom Eagleton, Bill Brock, Abe Ribicoff, Donald Rumsfeld, William Webster, Mel Laird, Nicholas Katzenbach, Stuart Eizenstat, Warren Christopher, or Ray Marshall are not a dime a dozen.

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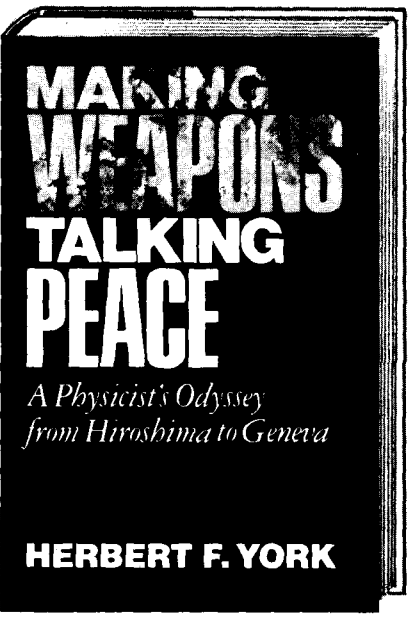

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TEAMSTERS MUGGED

To the editors:

In an article rife with unsubstantiated personal attacks, Thomas Geoghegan ("Mobbed," November 16) apparently was trying to say that his sensitive, lawyerly soul disapproves of unionists reaching out to unionists in an effort both to unite the labor movement and to support the principles of free trade unionism that are currently threatened by the Justice Department's consideration of plans to place the Teamsters and other unions under government trusteeship. Geoghegan is not one of the legion of lawyers who make their fortunes besmirching unions and exploiting workers. He "sups at labor's table" and ought to know better. His gratuitous slap at unions being undemocratic is bizarre. Unions are the most responsive and democratic major private institutions in our society. (For example, the delegates to conventions that elect union leadership are required to be elected by secret ballot by their local membership.) The labor movement is far from perfect. But it is entitled to credit for closing ranks and trying to unite its constituents in the interest of America's workers and their families.

VICTOR KAMBER
Washington, D.C.

To the editors:

The faculty of the University of Akron is currently considering affiliation with Teamsters Local 24. Contrary to the picture painted by Thomas Geoghegan, the efforts put forth by the union have only promoted the most democratic principles, endorsed the basic rights of the rank and file, and ensured an atmosphere for an independent local. The basic problem labor has always had are the naysayers, who serve, perhaps not by intent but by consequence, the promotion of inequality and unjust economic treatment of all workers. Geoghegan's piece carries with it an air of righteous indignation that is illusory.

ROBERT DEITCHMAN
Akron, Ohio

UNCIVILIZED

To the editors:

P. J. O'Rourke, in "Harry, Krishna, and Me" (November 2), gives absolutely no

continued on page 49

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CAPITAL IS ESSENTIAL FOR BUSINESSES TO GROW.

For a business to grow, it needs more than quality goods and services. Or an efficent distribution network. Or a creative management team.

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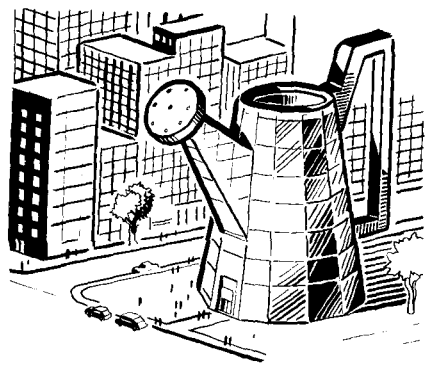

million, only 800 are rated investment grade. That leaves some 22,000 companies, or 95% of American businesses, whose only access to the public debt market is through high yield bonds.

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THE NEW REPUBLIC
DECEMBER 14, 1987

THE BOOK ON IRANAMOK

It's understandable how Republican backbenchers in the House can come to view politics as a form of warfare. Take-no-prisoners rhetoric, automatic polarization of opinion, and the tendency to view as enemies all those who are not ideological brothers—these are the characteristics of an oppressed minority within a minority, which derives its comfort from a sense of purity. It's understandable too how a president might welcome a hyperpartisan on the White House staff—a Pat Buchanan, for instance—to keep beacon fires alight and prevent pragmatists and deal-makers from turning an administration's original principles to mush.

But for a major area of government policy-making responsibility to be taken over by zealots, political road warriors, and geopolitical paranoids is profoundly dangerous to the country. It was officials of just such mentality who led the Reagan administration into the Iranamok scandal. Fortunately, they were caught and stopped before doing permanent damage to anything other than the administration's own credibility.

However, the backbench mentality lives on in the minority report of Congress's Iran-*contra* investigating committees. "President Reagan and his staff made mistakes," the eight conservative Republicans acknowledge in their statement, but "there was no constitutional crisis, no systematic disrespect for 'the rule of law,' no grand conspiracy, and no administration-wide dishonesty or cover-up." On television, various authors of the minority report pronounced the majority's findings to be "hysterical," and the minority document claims that "a great deal" of the majority report is "overdrawn, speculative, and built on a selective use of the committees' documentary materials," not to mention partisan. One minority contributor, Representative Henry Hyde, declared the committees' work "a witch-hunt."

In fact, this was a hunt that produced real witches. As the majority declared in its summary, "The common ingredients on the Iran and *contra* policies were secrecy, deception, and disdain for law. A small group of senior officials believed that they alone knew what was right. They viewed knowledge of their actions by others in the government as a threat to their objectives. They told neither the secretary of state nor the American people of their actions. When exposure was threatened, they destroyed official documents and lied to Cabinet officials, to the public, and to elected representatives in Congress. They testified that they even withheld key facts from the president."

If there was no constitutional crisis in Iranamok, there certainly was a threat to constitutional process. Lt. Col. Oliver North testified that CIA Director William Casey hoped to develop an "off the shelf" covert action capability that would have conducted secret operations without oversight from Congress and even, perhaps, without the knowledge of the president. The minority report asserts there is no evidence that Casey's hope was ever realized. Actually the Iranamok goings-on—the Iran arms sale, the diversion of some funds for use by the *contras*, and the holding back of some money for hostage-ransoming in Lebanon or for future activities—constituted the beginning of just such a system. It's a safe bet that if Iranamok had not been exposed—initially by a newspaper in Beirut, not by the ostensibly adversarial American media—North would have found any number of covert projects to carry out around the world and might have created his very own bureaucracy inside the National Security Council.

Contrary to the minority's assertion, there was a systematic disrespect for the law evidenced in White House behavior. Under Section 501 of the National Security Act, the executive branch is required to report "significant anticipated intelligence activity" to Congress. It did not report the sale of arms to Iran. We think it is clear beyond all doubt that, in giving money, intelligence, and military direction to the *contras*, the administration violated the series of laws known together as the Boland amendment, restricting American government support for the Nicaraguan resistance. At the very least, the administration found an arguable loophole in the law and then lied about what it was doing so that Congress wouldn't have the opportunity to clarify its intentions. Even that—the case of the administration's *defenders*—is described accurately enough by the phrase "disrespect for the rule of law."

And once the Iran story began to become public, the administration did engage in a massive attempt to cover up. President Reagan at first refused comment, claiming hostages' lives were at stake. When he did speak, he said reports about the arms sales had "no foundation." Later, he

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admitted some arms had been transferred—but less than would fill the cargo hold of a transport plane, and only to develop contact with potential moderates in Iran. It was "utterly false," he said, that the arms were being traded for hostages. Yet all the evidence suggests that getting hostages released was always the president's primary motivation.

What can one call the shredding of incriminating documents, the rewriting of chronologies, and the preparing of false statements, except a cover-up? The congressional majority rightly singles out Attorney General Edwin Meese for special condemnation—especially for his failure to conduct a systematic and arms-length investigation of the scandal, and for allowing destruction of evidence.

There is no evidence in the Iranamok report that President Reagan committed impeachable high crimes and misdemeanors. But there is overwhelming evidence to support the majority's charge of negligence toward his sworn duty to "take care that the laws be faithfully executed." Despite his own professed optimism about America's fundamental strength, Reagan put officials in charge of U.S. policy who distrusted its constitutional processes and its ability to confront adversaries while observing the law. Despite his vaunted skills as a communicator, he abandoned his responsibility to persuade the public and Congress to follow his controversial Central America policy, and proceeded covertly instead. When he got caught, he lied and let others lie. Reagan has suffered deservedly for these monumental "mistakes." He has lost the country's trust for his last two years of office. If he were now to subvert the legal process by pardoning potential criminal defendants, he would be doing more than that. He would be risking a permanent blight on his entire presidency. □

THE ZEITGEIST CHECKLIST

BY CHARLES PAUL FREUND

This Week		Last Week	Weeks on Chart
1.	CENTS AND SENSIBILITY	1	6
2.	MORE EQUAL PIGS	*	9
3.	CUBAN MOORAGE CRISIS	—	1
4.	SOUL BOTHER NUMBER ONE	*	3
5.	SECOND TERM PAPER	*	36
6.	NEWS ROOM	—	1
7.	BLACK MARKS	—	1
8.	HIGH RISE	—	1
9.	NATURE OF POLITICS	*	2
10.	A CLOCKWORK AUTUMN	—	1

1. CENTS AND SENSIBILITY

Budgetry. Success in governance in Washington is being redefined as the absence of total failure. The silver lining in the budget compromise is that although nobody in the financial community thinks it amounts to much, they had long abandoned hope that it would. Thus it avoids doing actual harm. This is the likely mode for the remainder of Reagan's term.

2. MORE EQUAL PIGS

Glasnost. The sense that the West understands more or less what's going on in the Soviet Union is slipping away. The Stalinoid Yeltsin case is discomfiting, as is *Pravda*'s coverage. Current wisdom has Gorbachev moving politically to survive, but no view holds all the disparate pieces. Given the positions of the two superpower leaders, this will indeed be a historic summit.

3. CUBAN MOORAGE CRISIS

Marielitos. Hey, that's not Lincoln's ghost in the White House, it's Carter's. First Reagan loses his bearings over Iran, then the Marielito situation—the same one—turns into a mess. If the U.S. agrees to be Cuba's steam valve, then what we've got is a perpetual immigration machine.

4. SOUL BOTHER NUMBER ONE

Robertson. Pat Robertson has emerged as a GOP factor; he may take votes *from* his rivals. In fact, Robertson looks just like a third party; his core support remains those he's brought *to* the process. Third parties are always absorbed, plank by selective plank, by a major party, but the GOP doesn't have that luxury. It politicized the Christian subculture and now must address its rising expectations.

5. SECOND TERM PAPER

Iranamok. The odd thing about the media handling of the final Iranamok report was not the headline overkill. It's that many of the same papers that ran banners about an involved, activist Reagan on page one actually subscribe, on the editorial page, to the distracted, uninvolved Reagan of the Tower Report. Anyway, the real Iranamok news is cultural: Stevie Wonder and Earth, Wind and Fire have released songs about it.

*Item resurfaces in the Zeitgeist after at least one week's absence.

6. NEWS ROOM

El Salvador. El Salvador is returning to the news, a direct result of the White House loss of control in Nicaragua. Coverage of Nicaragua bore no relation to reader interest; it was geared to Reagan's rhetoric. That rhetoric is now meaningless, and reporters who now know Central America are filling a vacuum. It's the mechanics of news, the specific gravity of coverage.

7. BLACK MARKS

Black students. Do blacks have a different "learning style"? Are they inferential rather than deductive? Educators wrestling with low achievement among black students are coming up with all kinds of theories, including anti-learning peer pressure and Black English. Some of this is dangerous; it posits blacks as intrinsically different. The cultural approach makes sense. It explains not only black academic failure, but success as well.

8. HIGH RISE

Donald Trump. A century ago, Donald Trump would have built a mansion on Washington's Massachusetts Avenue and spent his way into D.C.'s winter society. Today, he's on the newsweekly covers, runs opinion ads in the papers, goes to New Hampshire in primary season, and gets courted by cash-poor Democrats. What's the difference? Except that Trump seems to believe what he reads about himself, not much.

9. NATURE OF POLITICS

Environment. The environment is expanding as an issue, but the growth is horizontal. New England is worried about ozone, the Northwest about reforestation, New York about electromagnetic radiation, San Francisco about Hetch Hetchy, etc. Alpine forests are dying, the oceans rising, the deserts expanding. So which U.S. candidate has associated himself with the issue, and why not?

10. A CLOCKWORK AUTUMN

Leaf blowers. Rakes are going the way of hand mowers. Leaf blowers have reached a critical mass in many cities; the American autumn has been mechanized. Turning leaves no longer mean bonfires, leaves scratching dryly in the wind, kicking through leaf piles, or chilly Sundays clearing the lawn. Turning leaves means days of whining noise and the instant disposal of the season. Fall and decline.

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NOTEBOOK

☐ WHAT DID THE PRESIDENT KNOW AND WHEN DID HE LIE ABOUT IT?

"On Iran, however, the report says Reagan knowingly made untrue statements."

—*Washington Post*, November 19 (news story)

"No claim is made in the report that Mr. Reagan himself knowingly lied."

—*Washington Post*, November 19 (editorial)

(thanks to Senator J. Bennett Johnston, Washington, D.C.)

☐ SUPPLY-SIDE ECONOMICS, SOVIET-STYLE: Over caviar and filet mignon at the Soviet Embassy in Washington on November 20, Ambassador Yuri Dubinin toasted Blanchette Rockefeller, doyenne of capitalism's first family. The occasion was the donation to the Soviets of two 15th-century Russian icons that Mrs. Rockefeller had purchased at a London gallery in 1969. The icons were from the Cathedral of St. Sophia in Novgorod. "We want the world and the Soviet Union to know that capitalists not only take things but sometimes return things to their home," Mrs. Rockefeller said. Very sweet, but not exactly accurate. Capitalists don't "take" things—they buy them, which means that someone sells them. We have no idea how these particular icons got from the cathedral in Novgorod to a London gallery. But the vast majority of Russian icons and other national treasures now in the West are there as a direct result of the Russian Revolution. Some were sold by the newly impoverished aristocracy. Many, though—especially from churches—were unloaded for hard currency by the Soviet government itself. (This is how the egregious Dr. Armand Hammer got his start as both an international financier and an art connoisseur.) The Soviets may be thinking: hey, this capitalism is great stuff—you can sell something, then get it back for free. From the Rockefellers, no less.

☐ SUCH GOOD FRIENDS:

Wright, Shultz Say Feud Over

—*Washington Post*, November 18

Wright, Shultz fail to resolve differences

—*Philadelphia Inquirer*, same day

(thanks to P. K. Eberly, Wrightsville (sic), Pennsylvania)

☐ FIRST, THE GOOD NEWS:

Report sees drop in AIDS

—*Chicago Tribune*, November 15

Estimate of AIDS Cases Rises

—*New York Times*, same day

(thanks to Jerome Clark, Evanston, Illinois)

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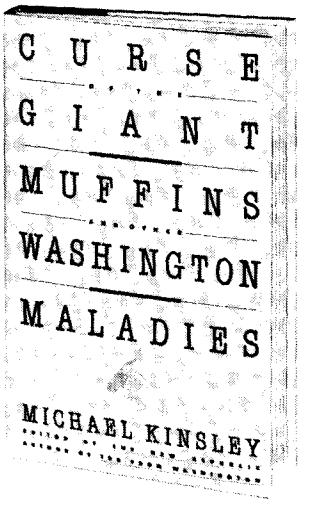

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White House Watch

Bombshells

THE IMPRESSION Paul Weyrich got of President Reagan in a phone call and a White House meeting runs against the grain. Weyrich, a New Right leader, has never thought much of Reagan, but he found the president "very engaging" and "sharp, never off the track" when they talked recently. Ben Wattenberg, the conservative Democrat and editor of *Public Opinion*, sat at Reagan's table at the state dinner for Israeli president Chaim Herzog and found Reagan at the top of his intellectual game. Among White House aides too the black mood may be lifting. A senior official says "momentum" will return once Judge Anthony Kennedy is confirmed for the Supreme Court, the new budget compromise is enforced, and the agreement banning medium-range missiles is signed with the Soviets.

The good news for Reagan is that all three of these are likely to happen. The bad news is that it won't make much difference. The Reagan rebound so desperately sought by the White House requires bolder stuff. Ken Khachigian, the former aide to President Nixon and occasional speechwriter for Reagan, says the president should drop a bomb, some surprise announcement that catches the press by surprise, discombobulates his opponents, and dominates the agenda. Nixon was good at this. "He understood the value of surprise," says Khachigian. "He took pleasure in the fact he could surprise the media, throw people off-balance, and take charge." Nixon wasn't above artificially adding to the surprise, according to Khachigian. He once suggested that aides make his announcement of a large troop withdrawal from Vietnam more dramatic by hinting beforehand that a troop increase was coming.

Reagan doesn't have to go that far. Expectations for his last 14 months are extraordinarily low. So if he proposes anything new and bold, it would have plenty of shock value. The key is that it be both new and bold. Merely pursuing an old policy more aggressively by every means at his disposal—speeches, Saturday radio addresses, etc.—isn't enough. That might be bold, but it wouldn't be new. If a controversial policy hasn't carried the day by now, it probably won't. Nor will a small policy shift or personnel change do the trick. That would be new but not bold. No, Reagan doesn't have to reverse a major policy, but if he wants to turn it into a bomb there at least must be new parts to the policy or a dramatic new way of achieving it. For maximum surprise, Reagan must do something that he said he wouldn't. And he must do it out of the blue. Agreeing, under pressure, to another tax hike won't suffice.

That's the theory. As luck would have it, there are any number of bold proposals circulating among White House aides, administration officials, and Reagan's outside advisers. If he put a squad of these people in a room for two or three hours, they'd come up with an entirely new agenda. In fact, I've already talked to some of them. Here are a few of their proposals.

The Managua summit. For years now, Reagan has been refusing to meet with Sandinista officials. That approach clearly isn't working now. President Daniel Ortega is carrying the day in public relations, and the *contras* are going down the drain. Reagan doesn't have to abandon his goal of a democratic Nicaragua. All that's required is a change in his method of seeking it. Imagine the good p.r. he'd get if he announced that he was ready and willing to confer at a summit with Ortega right on Danny's turf. Of course, it wouldn't quite be *mano a mano*. Reagan would have one condition, namely that he bring along *contra* leader Adolfo Calero as one of his advisers at the summit. A trip to Managua, which Ortega would find difficult to turn down, could be a p.r. bonanza for Reagan. He could stress all his usual points about the Sandinistas. But from Managua, they'd seem fresh. Dwight Eisenhower won an election by promising to go to Korea. Reagan is older, but Managua is closer.

The opening to Moscow. One of the real puzzlers for the administration is figuring out how to give Mikhail Gorbachev a hand in deepening *glasnost* and *perestroika* in the Soviet Union. The dream, of course, is that Gorbachev would turn the country into a sort of democracy. But what does Reagan have that Gorbachev wants? One thing comes to mind: Star Wars. Reagan says he won't use Star Wars as a bargaining chip in arms talks. This would involve bigger stakes. What if Reagan offered to cash in Star Wars in exchange for a policy of unfettered emigration and free elections in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe? Gorbachev would probably say no, but the offer would get a lot of attention. And to right-wingers here who complained, Reagan could say that you don't need a missile defense system against another democracy.

The balanced budget. In January Reagan will submit a budget to Congress for fiscal 1989. Democrats love to dismiss the president's budgets as DOA and sneer that he's never sent up a balanced one. They'd be thrown into disarray if his new budget were balanced. True, it would have to be balanced the right way. Merely proposing deeper than ever cuts in domestic programs and entitlements wouldn't impress anyone. But some new taxes would: luxury taxes on items for the wealthy, limitations on tax advantages for the well-to-do, such as the elimination of the deduction for interest on second homes or on mortgages above $100,000, and so on. Reagan could boost taxes on the rich without raising the new top rate of 28 percent. These, along with a steep gas tax at the pump and spending cuts, might be enough. Budget gimmicks could provide the rest. And Reagan would be able to seize the economic agenda.

The Burger appointment. The president could put former Chief Justice Warren Burger back on the Supreme Court by recess appointment, which doesn't require Senate confirmation. This would give conservatives a fifth vote as the Court takes up some crucial cases this winter—gay rights is one—and clear the way for Kennedy to come aboard in

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February. Who would argue that Burger is unqualified to sit on the high court? Not many.

The conservative social program. Education Secretary William Bennett and his assistants have lots of ideas on this front. First off, Reagan could announce a new theme of "empowering the poor" in his State of the Union address in January, an initiative including tenant ownership of public housing, enterprise zones, compulsory job training for welfare recipients, and vouchers for schools. To give his program credibility, Reagan would have to spend much, much more, the money, some $10 billion to $20 billion, coming out of the Defense Department budget, which is going to be cut anyway. Funding for Head Start (currently $1.4 billion) could be doubled or tripled, and Reagan could guarantee every eligible three- and four-year-old a chance to participate. Education standards could be tightened, with schools that fail, say, to teach English effectively being denied federal funds.

The veto strategy. Almost from the day Reagan took office, his aides have been talking veto. The talk is hollow. The president has been very sparing in use of the veto. But that could change. Reagan could make the stakes more than simply saving money. He could threaten to veto the big continuing resolution and let the government shut down unless Congress gives him a line-item veto. Or he could refuse to go along with a new boost in the debt limit until Congress votes out a balanced budget amendment.

Resignation. Despite the rumors, Reagan has never considered this. But if he stepped down, there would be great interest in the new Republican administration. It would be free to adopt new policies, have a fresh Cabinet, even send up a new nominee for the Supreme Court. "The trouble with this is that it would make George Bush the president," complained an administration official. Still, a new Bush administration would probably be livelier than an old Reagan administration. And it would also increase the likelihood that a Republican would be elected president in 1988.

I CAME UP WITH these seven proposals in a dozen conversations with Reagan aides. Were Reagan to scratch beneath the surface, I'm sure he'd get more and maybe better proposals. There's more intellectual candlepower and political recklessness left in his administration than I would have guessed. But Reagan has to tap it. And chances are, he won't. Reagan has turned passive, and most of his aides don't think a radical departure is required. They're happy for Reagan to keep to the script, figuring this will keep him out of harm's way, give him some new bragging points such as the arms treaty, and improve his popularity. He'll be popular all right, a popular lame duck. "I don't think you have to throw a bomb," says a senior White House official. "There's something to be said for consistency." There is, but not when your administration is drifting into irrelevance.

FRED BARNES

THE PRESS

BETRAYAL

I WAS ROOTING from the sidelines, alone in my office glued to the radio. When Rita Braver of CBS breathlessly reported, on Thursday afternoon, October 29, that President Reagan would nominate Judge Douglas H. Ginsburg for the Supreme Court, I cheered out loud. Little did I realize that my efforts over the next nine days to help my closest friend of 25 years would result in a tale, told on television and by such respected publications as the *New York Times*, *Newsweek*, and THE NEW REPUBLIC, that I betrayed him by turning him into the press for smoking marijuana. This is the true tale about their false one.

On the Monday following Doug's nomination, I was interviewed by Al Kamen of the *Washington Post*, and on Wednesday by Nina Totenberg of National Public Radio. Doug's involvement with marijuana never came up in these interviews, nor in any contact, direct or indirect, that I had with anyone before the story became public. I later learned that calls by Kamen and Totenberg to the Justice Department had resulted in Doug's disclosure of limited marijuana use. Totenberg has said that anyone who doubts my word—that I was *not* a source—can call her. Although the *Post* had "multiple" sources, it has a standard policy against reducing the possible sources by eliminating even one. Catch-22.

Out of the blue, on early Thursday afternoon, November 5, reporters called me about rumors regarding Doug's use of drugs. I said this was ridiculous, but wanted to report the matter to Steve Cannon, Doug's representative, whom I reached in Senator Robert Dole's office. Steve asked me to identify the year of a party in Cambridge. This question, on the heel of the rumors, triggered my memory of a party I had long forgotten. When I called back, Steve read me the statement Doug was going to make: he had used marijuana once in the '60s and on a few occasions in the '70s.

At around 6:30 I agreed to talk with David Lewis of ABC about the marijuana story, but only *after* I had verified that Doug's statement had been released. I told the truth. I had been at a party, in 1978 or 1979, which I left when I became aware that marijuana was present. When I heard, shortly thereafter, that Doug had smoked marijuana at that party, I remonstrated with him, and he indicated he had been wrong.

Why did I speak to the press? I feared, as Doug's friend and by then widely quoted spokesman, that I would damn him by saying "No comment." I thought it would help to say I only knew of a single incident that he had long ago regretted, which should not disqualify him from serving on the Supreme Court. I did say that. But the press was generally more interested in the party than my conclusions.

About 10 p.m. Thursday I made the same statement to other networks, and to the print media, including Chris

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Wells of the *New York Times*. At 11 p.m. I saw my interview with Dan Rea of Boston's local NBC affiliate. When Jack Williams, the anchorman, asked Rea why I had made my statement, implying that I had ratted on my friend, Rea accurately pointed out that my interview had come after Judge Ginsburg's own disclosure. Other television stations were not so careful. The media had begun to spin its own tale.

The Ginsburg stories in the early edition of the Friday *New York Times*, which we get in Boston, contained no reference to me. But the late edition falsely reported that I said I *saw* Doug smoke marijuana. I complained that day to *Times* reporters. The *Times* story also failed to make clear that I only spoke to the press about marijuana *after* Doug's own statement was public. On Saturday the *Times* reported on Doug's probable withdrawal. My picture appeared with the caption: "He saw Douglas H. Ginsburg smoke marijuana at a party in 1978." The false implication was clear: I had fingered him. I complained again. Their correction, admitting they had "misstated" the facts under the picture caption, appeared the following Tuesday, November 10.

ON MONDAY, November 9, *Newsweek* weighed in. Its Ginsburg cover story reported on a conversation a "left-wing law professor at Harvard" had with Nina Totenberg. It then stated: "Subsequently [to what, when?] another Harvard professor, Hal Scott, who describes himself as Ginsburg's 'best friend' [sarcasm] confirmed [to whom?] that he saw Ginsburg take a couple of puffs of pot at one party [invention] and scolded him about it the next day." And then the coup de grace, my picture with the clever caption: "With friends like these . . ."

Ann McDaniel of *Newsweek* says she questioned the story and asked Peter McKillop to check it. Robert Rivard, chief of correspondents, says McKillop checked it and discovered it was false, but McKillop's true version failed to find its way into the magazine. This did not stop McDaniel or McKillop from signing the story, however. But not to worry. *Newsweek* generously agreed on November 20, after two days of negotiation, to publish my letter to the editor with a one-line comment that they regret the error. But it is not in this week's edition.

This false judgment was then joined by Marty Peretz of this magazine in his "Cambridge Diarist." He saw me as "betraying" my friend, as "turn[ing] in Ginsburg to the press," and as serving as a "reliable informant." He apparently missed the *New York Times* correction that appeared before his magazine went to press.

Television stations failed to make clear the crucial chronology. The *New York Times*, our "paper of record," published the fingering photo with a caption that they had been earlier told and have since admitted was inaccurate. *Newsweek* ran a story that they knew beforehand and have promised to admit was false. And THE NEW REPUBLIC, like others, mistakenly relied on these reports to reach a false conclusion. This journalistic cascade, resulting in a fictitious "tale" of betrayal of friendship, is a real tale of how the press betrayed its special responsibility to all of us—to tell the truth.

HAL S. SCOTT

Hal S. Scott is a professor at Harvard Law School.

Candidate of the moment.

NEO-GEPHARDT

"I WOULD get rid of government in health care. I would get rid of government in education to a much greater extent than we have. I would discharge those responsibilities either to the private sector or to the states."

Barry Goldwater in 1964? Ronald Reagan in 1980? No, this was a then-obscure House Democrat named Richard Gephardt in 1981. At the time, Gephardt belonged to a loose party faction known as the "Atari Democrats" or "neoliberals." Although neoliberalism never achieved the depth or coherence that its advocates had hoped for, the Atari Democrats did some good work in trying to wed compassionate politics with dispassionate economic analysis.

Of all the Democratic contenders in the 1988 presidential race, Gephardt is the one most closely tied to neoliberalism. And he has worked the hardest to abandon it.

- In 1980 he joined with Representative David Stockman in sponsoring a bill to deregulate health care. In 1984 he joined with Senator Edward Kennedy in sponsoring a bill to impose cost controls on the medical industry.
- As noted earlier, he once spoke of curbing Washington's role in education. Now he wants to shower America's schools with federal grants. According to the verbatim transcript of a 1986 conference of the Democratic Leadership Council, he now seeks a bigger federal role because the AFL-CIO had informed him that by 1990, "half the people in the country are liable to be unemployed because they can't write good enough. They won't be able to compute good enough." Maybe he's right: even presidential candidates don't talk good enough.
- In 1981 Gephardt proposed a constitutional amendment to protect neighborhood schools against court-ordered racial busing. In 1987 he told the NAACP that the nomination of Robert Bork for the Supreme Court threatened "all the progress of the past 50 years" on civil rights court cases.
- For years Gephardt backed an anti-abortion constitutional amendment. Now he doesn't. He once opposed federal funding for abortions. At the 1987 convention of the National Women's Political Caucus, he pledged not to veto abortion money as president.

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• In 1981 he deplored the fragmentation of social programs: "[We] have AFDC, we have a number of other subsidy programs, like Social Security and SSI. It would make sense for me to consolidate that." Now that he's wooing elderly primary voters, he no longer refers to Social Security as a "subsidy." In fact, he's co-sponsoring a bill to establish the Social Security Administration as an independent agency.

• In the early part of the decade, Gephardt worked for tax simplification, saying that lower rates would help our economy more than special tax breaks. But interest groups opposed real tax reform. According to the definitive book on the 1986 tax bill, *Showdown at Gucci Gulch* by Alan Murray and Jeffrey Birnbaum, "Gephardt dropped the ball on tax reform while the legislation was experiencing hard times.... [His] dedication did not last."

• In 1982 Gephardt said that America's economic future belongs to people who do mental labor, not to "a work force that is particularly adept at making things. This is going to have to be a population that is particularly adept at thinking up things. That will result in some amount of manufacturing and production, but it will retain its competitive edge vis-à-vis other parts of the world with its superiority, its ability to be ahead on the thought-process end of things." Now he says that the decline in manufacturing jobs is a grave national problem, and he serves as the leading congressional proponent of protectionist trade legislation. Of course, he calls his measure "The Gephardt Global Market Access Amendment" and denies that it is protectionist.

All politicians of both parties, at least successful ones, trim their sails to adjust to prevailing winds. Few have shifted as dramatically, quickly, and smoothly as Richard Gephardt.

JOHN J. PITNEY JR.

John J. Pitney Jr. is assistant professor of government at Claremont McKenna College.

The Supreme Court reopens an old question.

ALCOHOL AND FREE WILL

BY ROBERT WRIGHT

"HE'S A SICK PERSON," says Jane Wyman of Ray Milland. "It's as though there were something wrong with his heart or his lungs." The movie is *The Lost Weekend*, and Milland is Don Birnam, an aspiring writer whose potential is stifled only by his perennial willingness to pawn anything, including his typewriter, for enough money to drink himself unconscious. Wyman, Birnam's aspiring fiancée, is explaining why he deserves forgiveness and patience. It's not as though his disintegration were his fault, she's saying; the man has a disease.

The movie, released in 1945, could hardly have been better timed. For the previous ten years, Alcoholics Anonymous had been pushing the idea that alcoholism is a disease, and in 1946, about the time *The Lost Weekend* was winning a fistful of Academy Awards, the idea received the imprimatur of science with the publication of E. M. Jellinek's "Phases in the Drinking History of Alcoholics." Jellinek (who, perhaps not coincidentally, based his study on questionnaires designed and distributed by AA) found that alcoholism follows a roughly predictable pattern, from social drinking through various stages of excess, culminating in secret drinking, blackouts, and other symptoms. For the true alcoholic, Jellinek found, this grim cycle is virtually inexorable, and once he is in its grip, a single drink can destroy all self-control. Salvation lies in accepting that he has a disease—that he will never be able to drink like other people, and complete abstinence is his only alternative to a squalid, perhaps short, life.

With the help of AA (not to mention Jane Wyman), Jellinek's model took root. Today a huge majority of Americans—and of the psychologists, physicians, and other therapists who treat alcoholics—consider alcoholism a disease.

Still, when this idea's implications are made explicit, the average citizen's enthusiasm for it may cool. Should the insurance premiums of teetotalers and moderate drinkers go to pay for other people's excesses, as they must in the numerous states whose legislatures have dictated that group health insurance cover alcoholism? Should Veterans Administration hospitals and Medicare, amid present fiscal pressures, spend tax dollars on people who can't stay off the bottle? And what is the import of the Federal Rehabilitation Act, which defines alcoholism as a handicap and prohibits federal agencies and federally subsidized institutions from discriminating against the handicapped?

On December 7 the Supreme Court is hearing the case of two reformed alcoholics who contend that the VA owes them an education because their drinking kept them from

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exhausting educational benefits within the ten years of military discharge normally allotted. They note that the VA grants extensions for mental or physical problems "not the result of . . . willful misconduct" and maintain that their drinking wasn't willful; they were victims of a disease. To withhold these benefits, they say, would be to discriminate against the handicapped. This may seem like a trivial matter, but there is a slippery slope here. In a federal appeals court in Philadelphia, a former Marine is suing to collect a VA disability pension on grounds that alcoholism renders him unemployable.

Assuming the Supreme Court doesn't duck the disease issue with a narrow ruling (an option left wide open by a tricky jurisdictional issue), the upshot of its decision will probably be either: (1) that alcoholism is indeed a disease, powerful enough to extinguish volition; or (2) that drinking, even for an alcoholic, is ultimately a choice freely made, the consequences of which the drinker must bear. Neither of these findings is in the interest of enlightenment. If the Court really wants to clear things up, it should dispense with the concepts of "disease" and of "willful" behavior altogether. The debate over alcoholism's essential nature is a prime example of how vestiges of the scientific and philosophical past can impair judicial reasoning and the making of public policy.

THE RATIONALE for considering alcoholism a disease has evolved since Jellinek's landmark paper. In the forthcoming book *Heavy Drinking*, a formidable critique of alcoholism as a disease, Herbert Fingarette, a philosopher at the University of California, Santa Barbara, shows that research in recent decades has painted a more complex picture than the common phrase "alcohol dependence syndrome" implies. Studies suggest that alcoholics do not, in fact, all follow the same route to dissolution, and that some can even learn to drink moderately; alcoholism, Fingarette argues, is not a single, binary condition whose course is predictable, but a grab bag of different kinds of problems.

In response, defenders of the disease concept say that there may be several kinds of disease under the rubric of alcoholism, just as there are various strains of flu. And, they add, some problem drinkers whose patterns diverge from the norm aren't "real" alcoholics anyway. Still, even as they dismiss Fingarette's criticisms, these people are also doing some strategic repositioning. They are staking their case less to the supposed clinical coherence of alcoholic behavior and more to fresh evidence of that behavior's biological underpinnings.

For instance, some people appear to be genetically predisposed to problem drinking. Alcoholics' children who are adopted by non-alcoholics are several times more likely to become alcoholic than the adopted children of non-alcoholic parents. And studies of identical twins reared apart also point to a genetic factor. Further, there are physiological abnormalities—in biochemistry, and in brain wave patterns under certain laboratory conditions—that occur disproportionately in alcoholics. In fact, some occur disproportionately in the children of alcoholics, even children who have never had a drink. All of this, the argument goes, underscores the soundness of the disease label and the fallacy of blaming alcoholics for their problems. Since the biological deck is stacked against them, it is wrong, as one researcher at the National Council of Alcoholism put it, to label them "moral weaklings."

IT IS HARD to attack this line of argument, because it is hard to discern it clearly in the first place. Some alcoholism-as-disease advocates talk as if the physiological correlates of alcoholism might be causes of the disease, whereas others seem to view them more as biological labels, identifying alcoholics as fundamentally different from the rest of us. To the extent that a unifying theme exists, it is the belief that the more "biological" a given behavior is, the less control the behaver has over it.

This belief does not exactly belong along the frontiers of modern thought. To talk as if some behaviors (the free-will kind) have a purely psychological basis while others (the disease kind) have a partly physiological basis is like distinguishing between election victories due to a candidate's popular support and victories due to the number of votes received. It is a basic, if usually unspoken, tenet of modern behavioral science that physiological and psychological processes are not alternative explanations of behavior but parallel explanations. We presume that all aspects of subjective experience—ideas, emotions, epiphanies, cravings—have physiological counterparts; that every behavior, while explicable in terms of thoughts and feelings, could also be explained as the result of a particular flow of neuronal, hormonal, and other biochemical information; that all behavior is in the deepest sense physically compelled. This is just an assumption, of course, but it is an assumption central to science, and research in neurology, psychology, and genetics has tended to substantiate it.

Indeed, so has the very fact that many alcoholics have a characteristic brain-wave pattern; they have characteristic patterns of behavior and sensation, so any good scientific materialist would suspect the existence of characteristic physiological patterns. Granted, if the physiological patterns were neater and cleaner than the behavioral patterns, then the alcoholism-as-disease crowd could take heart; if there were a physiological abnormality that all alcoholics and no non-alcoholics possessed, then the claim that alcoholism is a single, coherent syndrome would be in some measure strengthened. But so far the physiological evidence is fragmented, just like the behavioral evidence: some alcoholics have this unusual trait, others have that one, and others have none. And all of these physiological traits can be found, with less frequency, in the non-alcoholic population.

Alcoholism-as-disease proponents may think this sermon about the philosophy of behavioral science pedantic and beside the point. The point, they will say, is that the physiological correlates of alcoholism, like the alcoholic behaviors themselves, appear to be, in some cases, hereditary. Alcoholics, in other words, are born, not made. Strictly speaking, of course, this isn't true. To say that alcohol-

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ism has a heritable component is not to say that alcoholism is ever preordained by the genes. It is to say that some people who inherit alcoholics' genes have a genetic predisposition toward heavy drinking, that the range of circumstances that will lead to alcoholism is broader for them than for most people.

NOW, IT MAY BE that this fact should deepen our compassion for alcoholics. But if it qualifies them as disease victims, and leaves them blameless for their behavior, then for the sake of consistency we are going to have to begin cutting down on the use of blame generally—and of credit. For there is now evidence that genes can similarly predispose people toward violent behavior, stellar intellectual achievement, and various other things. So should we consider violence a "disease" and exonerate murderers? Should we withhold praise from great mathematicians because their genes gave them a head start?

And these questions are just the beginning of the trouble. Science appears to be on the verge of perceiving a host of obscure connections between genes and behavior. Fingernail biting, reading pulp novels, altruism, entrepreneurship—thousands of such behaviors, some trivial and some consequential, may well turn out to vary according to genes. And even those behaviors not linked in this way will turn out to be under short-term physiological control, as the complex network of biochemical influences comes into focus. So if we are going to follow the alcoholism-as-disease logic, and equate genetic inclinations and physiological influences with the surrendering of volition, then we are going to have to give up on the concept of volition altogether. It is redundantly true that the more we understand about the mechanics of behavior, the more deterministic behavior will seem. (And it is worth noting that, notwithstanding the aversion of free-will aficionados to genetic explanations of behavior, it won't really matter whether the determinism appears to be mostly genetic or mostly environmental. When it comes to the question of free will, determinism is determinism is determinism.)

The alcoholism-as-disease advocates sometimes show encouraging signs of understanding all this, but they never seem to grasp its generality. In its friend-of-the-court brief in the Supreme Court case, the National Council of Alcoholism argues, "Whether any particular individual who drinks will become an alcoholic is largely the result of forces beyond his or her control. Extensive research has demonstrated that the disease of alcoholism is produced by a confluence of genetic/biochemical, environmental, and sociocultural factors." Can anyone think of a behavior that doesn't fit that description?

My point is not that we should abandon the concepts of blame and credit. Whatever science seems to say about the deterministic nature of human behavior, the inescapable fact is that no society can function well without holding people responsible for their actions. This is one of life's four or five great ironies: we are all victims of (or beneficiaries of) an extremely complex conspiracy between our genes and our environment, yet all of us must be held accountable for the results; otherwise, things fall apart. So, as the march of science yields more and more evidence that people are basically machines, we are going to have to get used to the idea of blaming robots for their malfunctions. It feels strange at first, but you get used to it after a while.

THERE ARE those who concede that the disease conception of alcoholism doesn't withstand scientific or philosophical scrutiny yet insist on preserving it as a "useful fiction." They say that (*a*) by absolving alcoholics of blame, this fiction keeps them from being saddled with "irrational guilt feelings," and (*b*) the word "disease" underscores the importance of abstinence. The obvious responses are: (*a*) What's so irrational about feeling guilty when you're flushing your life down the toilet and bringing your family along for the ride? For every alcoholic who is immobilized by guilt, there are probably several who use the "disease" idea to insulate themselves from the guilt that might otherwise incite a recovery; (*b*) People have been known to abstain completely from things—coffee, for example—without first concluding that they had a disease. AA could drop the word "disease" without appreciably altering its prescription for recovery.

Perhaps the most common "useful fiction" argument is that the disease conception of alcoholism keeps the treatment funds (now totaling an estimated $1 billion a year) flowing—from the government, from health insurance companies, from paternalistic corporations. Of course, the people most vociferously advancing this argument pay their rent with these funds, thus casting some doubt on their objectivity. Moreover, in *Heavy Drinking*, Fingarette shows that the efficacy of treatment programs remains unclear; because many treatment centers deal with precisely those patients who are most likely to recover on their own—the affluent, employed, and well-educated—seemingly impressive recovery statistics often mean less than meets the eye.

None of this is to say that corporations and insurance companies should stop pouring money into alcoholism treatment, or that alcoholic veterans shouldn't receive free therapy. Perhaps objective analysis—that is, analysis performed by someone other than the treatment industry's hired guns—would show that, given the costs and the benefits, it's often cheaper in the long run to subsidize certain kinds of treatment. (And certainly a socially inexpensive effort like AA is worth the trouble.) But this analysis shouldn't be short-circuited by the groundless presupposition that alcoholism is a disease in the sense that cancer is or a handicap in the sense that blindness is.

The treatment-industry spokesmen who are always waving around those suspiciously large estimates of the societal costs of untreated alcoholism like to maintain that they're not trying to tug at anyone's heartstrings. "We're talking dollars and cents," the director of the National Association of Addiction Treatment Providers told me. "We want to get beyond the compassion issue." Well, fine; let's get beyond it. The first step is to quit using the word "disease"—which, all told, is just a crutch. □

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The Democrats and Ortega's Last Gambit.

NICARAGUA CLIFFHANGER

BY ROBERT LEIKEN

THE WEEK before Daniel Ortega came to Washington, the Sandinistas had sustained the most embarrassing political and diplomatic defeat of their history. They had been obliged to recognize the "mercenary" *contras* as a Nicaraguan political adversary, and to accept the mediation of Cardinal Miguel Obando y Bravo, whose Church they had been harassing mercilessly. On the day Ortega named Obando y Bravo as mediator, Costa Rican president Oscar Arias said that he expected Ortega to consult with the cardinal about a proposal to present to the *contras* in Managua.

Just one week before, the Sandinistas had sworn they would "never under any circumstances hold talks." Now they had to act as belligerents in a civil, not a proxy, war. Their concession lent the *contras* unprecedented international legitimacy. Inside Nicaragua the impact was even more dramatic. The 30,000 Sandinista militants assembled in the revolutionary plaza greeted Ortega's speech with shocked silence. Their implacable leaders had blinked, had reversed themselves in front of the whole Nicaraguan nation, and had shown weakness for the first time. Such a concession to the *contras* was bound to deepen demoralization in the ranks of the military. And the ordinary Nicaraguan would pay little heed to Sandinista caveats—we are not negotiating, only "concerting a cease-fire"; the talks would be "technical, not political." He understood the essential thing. The *contras* had attained the first political objective of any insurgency. They had forced the government to recognize them as a legitimate belligerent force, a Nicaraguan political adversary. Ortega's concessions proved that the combination of military, political, and diplomatic pressure could force unexpected compromises.

How were Sandinista militants and ordinary Nicaraguans to interpret Daniel Ortega's concessions? The Sandinistas had devoted much of their propaganda and political resources over the past two years to undermining the Church and persuading international public opinion that the cardinal was a CIA agent. Last month, after Arias backed Obando y Bravo's offer to mediate a cease-fire, the Sandinistas enlisted the aid of Senator Christopher Dodd in seeking an alternative. Just before accepting Obando y Bravo, they were trying to get the Speaker of the House, Jim Wright, to replace him. Now Daniel Ortega, putting the best face on the matter, was calling Obando y Bravo "the ideal choice."

Indeed, on two previous occasions when they wished to exchange hostages for political prisoners, the Sandinistas themselves had chosen Obando y Bravo as their mediator. As archbishop of Managua, he had been the leader of the progressive wing of the Nicaraguan Catholic Church and a firm opponent of Somoza, issuing statements justifying armed rebellion against him. But when the Sandinistas turned repressive, Obando y Bravo became a powerful and critical voice. After his countrywide open-air masses began attracting huge, expectant throngs to his message of "neither communism nor capitalism" and of dialogue between the Sandinistas and the *contras*, the Sandinistas sent armed security agents to prevent the Church radio station from broadcasting tapes of his masses. Declaring a state of emergency, the government confiscated the Church newspaper and printing press, raided the Church welfare office, and proceeded to detain, intimidate, and expel priests and activists. The cardinal told New York Mayor Ed Koch last month that the Sandinistas were now training dozens of seminarians eventually to take over the Catholic Church, Nicaragua's remaining independent institution.

In "choosing" Obando y Bravo, the Sandinistas were forced to place their political fate in the hands of their most feared adversary. Obviously not their "ideal choice," they were stuck with him. So it was natural that the Sandinistas should try to circumvent Obando y Bravo's mediation. Ortega came to Washington, and within a week, the dour comandante was all smiles. He rejected an administration offer to meet with other Central American presidents once cease-fire talks were started. Instead, in a move that Ortega said would "leave the administration totally isolated," he got Wright to intervene. After a rejuvenating few days in imperialism's capital, he outlined a new Sandinista cease-fire proposal to a Washington group. "Speaker Wright provided us important support," he purred. He had reason for feeling so cocky. He had done an end run around Arias and the cardinal, taken the diplomatic initiative, cast aspersions on the *contras*' independence, put off meeting them in Managua, got the Speaker and the president to fighting again, and won important Democratic support for his position on the peace process. Beyond some headlines, it was unclear what Speaker Wright thought he had gained. Some Washington observers worried about his ambitions. One compared him to Al Haig, seizing "control" from a wounded administration.

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Wright, who delivered a swift kick at foreign policy bipartisanship, first entered the scene this summer as the engineer, with President Reagan, of a "bipartisan peace plan." That plan was far tougher on the Sandinistas than the Arias plan: it had confronted the Sandinistas with the dreaded specter of a bipartisan consensus for Central American democracy. Moreover, a plan authored by House Democrats could be the spearhead of an international campaign enlisting the Europeans and the Latin Americans. By comparison, the Arias plan, with its far looser provisions on democracy and a cease-fire and nothing about the Russians and the Cubans, seemed heaven-sent.

NONETHELESS, the accord signed in Guatemala was also something of a diplomatic reversal for the Sandinistas. It put the Sandinista-backed Contadora initiative in the shade. The arbitrators of regional conflicts were no longer Latin American countries, relatively well-disposed to the Sandinistas, but the Central Americans themselves, and in particular, Arias, critical and fearful of them. Whereas Contadora viewed the *contra* war as between the United States and Nicaragua, the Central Americans saw it as a civil war. For Contadora's emphasis on national sovereignty, security, and country-to-country negotiations, the Guatemala accord stressed democracy and negotiation among Nicaraguans. In signing it, the Sandinistas were forced to move onto risky ideological terrain and to countenance the possibility of a revival of their internal, civil opposition. Nevertheless, these risks were abstract and potential, while the Sandinistas saw some very concrete and immediate benefits, above all the prospect of getting rid of the *contras*.

And the Sandinistas needed a breather. This summer a reporter's firsthand account suggested the crisis the Sandinistas were facing inside the country. As the correspondent drives along several dozen miles of a "horrifying highway" in northern Nicaragua, he counts "hundreds of buried skeletons of automobiles. Some of them were destroyed by mines, while others were caught in ambushes. . . . The 'war zone' . . . embraces two-thirds of the republic's territory." The Nicaraguan economy is close to ruin: "Very acute shortages are seen everywhere; . . . the majority of the market stalls at the large central markets in Managua are empty." The war is to blame, but "at the same time—and all my Nicaraguan interlocutors admitted this—the crisis is being exacerbated by bad management." This article appeared not in the *Washington Times* or the *New York Post* or even THE NEW REPUBLIC, but in the June 24 edition of *Izvestia*.

The Sandinistas are not proud of their economic crisis and would like to alleviate it, but they are confident that with the instruments of social control they have created, they can administer it. By this summer, the *contras*, however, had become an altogether different matter. With the new U.S.-supplied equipment and training, the *contras* showed themselves to be far more effective fighters than anyone had expected. Last winter they fought their way through and around the Sandinistas' vaunted "forward defense" in the north. And by the spring they were operating throughout most of northern, southern, and eastern Nicaragua. In early July Managua admitted that the war had spread for the first time to the western department of León, in the populous Pacific coast region of the country.

Contra successes were directly related to military and political reforms instituted by resistance leaders with the backing of the administration and Congress. New leaders and new thinking among old leaders have dislodged the notion of *guerrilla convencional* and abetted the transition to coordinated small-unit operations. Equally important, the *contras* showed signs of developing stable, grass-root political organizations.

In August the *Wall Street Journal* reported that in Chontales province, "less than two hours' drive from Managua, in the center of the country, the *contras* have won the active support of the peasantry, . . . making for a convenient corridor between the *contras*' northern and southern fronts." In October Leslie Hunter, a Central American expert monitoring the peace agreement for Governor Chuck Robb's and Mayor Koch's Peace and Democracy Watch, reported that residents of Managua now referred to the *contras* as "*los muchachos*," the affectionate term once applied to the Sandinistas. Shortly thereafter a member of the anti-*contra* Witness for Peace organization held captive by the rebels for two weeks acknowledged that the *contras* seemed to "own" a vast zone of central and eastern Nicaragua. In November a *Washington Post* correspondent returned from a trip with the *contras* reporting that they "have built a network of informers, couriers, lookouts, food suppliers, and medical-support personnel in the area." A *New York Times* correspondent added that the rebels were "exploiting . . . popular discontent to build what amounts to an underground civilian wing of this guerrilla movement."

U.S. advisers have been offering such counsel for years; now the *contras* are listening. This is in part a result of the struggle within the *contras* by reformers who have been associated with former Sandinista government officials turned *contra* leaders, such as Arturo Cruz, Alfonso Robelo, and Alfredo Cesar. Though Cruz himself was a casualty of the bitter reform struggle, new *contra* leaders adopted some of his ideas, and old leaders, such as Aristides Sanchez, grasped the reformers' logic.

THE MILITARY offensive was accompanied by a shrewd political and diplomatic one. Instead of boycotting the Guatemala accords as they had done with Contadora's initiatives, the *contras* took everyone by surprise by cooperating. They proposed that further military aid be held in escrow, giving the Sandinistas the chance to comply with the peace plans' provisions for internal democracy. The *contras* looked statesmanlike, and at the same time put further pressure on Managua. Then the *contras* released their Sandinista prisoners, challenging the Sandinistas to release theirs. Next *contra* leaders visited

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Central American presidents to convince them of the importance of cease-fire negotiations between them and the Sandinistas. They argued that a negotiated cease-fire was the only way to preserve their moral and physical integrity. They noted that without the *contras* as an insurance policy, the Sandinistas would renege on their reforms. They emphasized to Arias that a negotiated cease-fire was the only way to reintegrate the *contras* into political life. Otherwise, there was a danger that some leaders and units would "radicalize" and fight on as counterrevolutionary bands.

Finally, *contra* leaders undertook to fly to Managua directly to negotiate with the Sandinistas. The Sandinistas hardly looked like peacemakers as they refused the *contra* offer and then pressured Central American Airlines into denying them passage. For the first time, the *contras* were contending with the Sandinistas on the level of public relations. Borrowing the Sandinistas' own tactics, and those of the Salvadoran guerrillas, clandestine *contra* supporters inside Managua contacted journalists from three major newspapers and invited them to travel with the *contra* patrol. The Sandinistas' gambit was failing. *Contra* aid had been shelved as an issue in Washington, and all eyes were on Nicaragua. Arias had won the Nobel Prize and was publicly pressuring, with repeated interviews in the *New York Times* and elsewhere, the Sandinistas to negotiate with the *contras*.

EQUALLY UNSETTLING to the Sandinista leadership was the utter failure of their attempts to use the mechanisms of the Guatemala accords to produce demoralization, disaffection, division, and desertion among the *contras*. On the contrary, the only major defection was from Sandinista ranks. On October 25 Maj. Roger Miranda, right-hand man of Defense Minister Humberto Ortega, secretary to the army's Joint Chiefs of Staff, coordinator of the Ministry of Defense, and a ranking member of the Sandinista Assembly (the equivalent of the Central Committee), defected to the U.S. Embassy in Mexico City. At a press conference acknowledging the defection, Ortega called it "the most important act of treason" in the history of the Sandinista army, "even more important than that of Edén Pastora." Miranda reportedly brought with him documents blueprinting a buildup of the Sandinista army to 600,000 and the purchase of sophisticated weapons to meet a purported U.S. invasion. Ortega seemed concerned that Miranda's disclosures could be used to portray Nicaragua as a country with aggressive designs on its neighbors, one that cannot be trusted to implement peace accords. Undoubtedly, there were also concerns that American officials would brief Arias on Miranda's information.

And just when the Sandinistas most needed their help, their "tactical" and "strategic allies" were least forthcoming. By the middle of 1986, after the Sandinistas cracked down on civil rights, shut down newspapers and radio stations, shackled the Church, and suspended their new constitution, West Germany, France, Britain, Italy, and the Netherlands had all suspended or sharply reduced bilateral economic aid. Managua's "strategic" ally also became more demanding this summer. Since the spring, Soviet officials have been openly grumbling about Sandinista corruption and mismanagement, and complaining about shoddy Nicaraguan exports to the Soviet bloc and their wastage of oil, which, along with weapons, constitutes Moscow's main export to Nicaragua.

In June Moscow informed the Sandinistas it was cutting their oil delivery in half and suggested that they shop elsewhere for the deficit. The Sandinistas spent the summer shopping fruitlessly for oil in Latin America and the Eastern bloc. It was not until September, after the Sandinistas signed the Guatemala accords and raised their gasoline prices, that Vladimir Zagladin of the Central Committee arrived in Managua with a promise of more oil and an invitation from Gorbachev to attend the anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution in November.

THE SANDINISTAS accepted the internal reforms called for by the Guatemala accord, because they were confident of controlling domestic opposition. They trusted in their security apparatus and in divisions among the opposition, divisions partly of the Sandinistas' own making. There are now a pro-Sandinista and several anti-Sandinista Conservative parties. Indeed, nearly every political party, labor union, professional organization, and religious group, including the Catholic Church, has a Sandinista clone. The democratic opposition, on the other hand, is virtually bereft of resources and leadership. Forty years of Somocista rule left Nicaragua with virtually no political tradition or experienced politicians. Young opposition leaders have been systematically imprisoned, murdered, or forced to emigrate. The brave few who remain often have little organizational skill and lead organizations without the vehicles, equipment, and money to broadcast their cause or organize at the grass roots.

Moreover, the Sandinistas are masters at retracting with the left hand what they have granted with the right. They convoked a "National Dialogue" but stacked it with pro-Sandinista parties. Under international pressure, the Sandinistas reopened the widely known independent newspaper *La Prensa*. *La Prensa* has been outspoken in its criticism of the Sandinistas, but it is now published by a staff of four reporters, two editors, and one photographer. Exiled *La Prensa* journalists, some working for the *contra* radio station, are afraid to return, especially after Daniel Ortega charged that the most eminent exiled *La Prensa* journalist, former editor Pedro Joaquin Chamorro, "is a proven CIA agent." Their fears were not quieted by the October 23 *turba*-beating of a *La Prensa* journalist.

Political rallies are, again, permitted in Nicaragua. But their reappearance has been accompanied by ominous signs. The first opposition rally was broken up by police who used clubs and electric prods on the demonstrators. The leader of the Nicaraguan Permanent Commission on Human Rights who was observing the rally was beaten, jailed, and put in isolation, finally to be released to Sena-

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tor Tom Harkin. In late September the Sandinistas permitted the largest anti-Sandinista political demonstration in years. But at the end of the rally, 18 activists were detained and threatened with military recruitment. They were let go after the *Washington Post* published a story on the incident.

October saw the reappearance of the notorious *turbas*. Their most spectacular action was in breaking up a prayer session of the Mothers of Political Prisoners at a Managuan church. They were cynically deployed with members of a pro-Sandinista organization of bereaved mothers of war-dead. Since the *turbas* do not belong formally to the government, Nicaraguan opposition and human rights officials fear that they can be utilized to subvert the essence of the Guatemala accords, while the Sandinistas profess compliance.

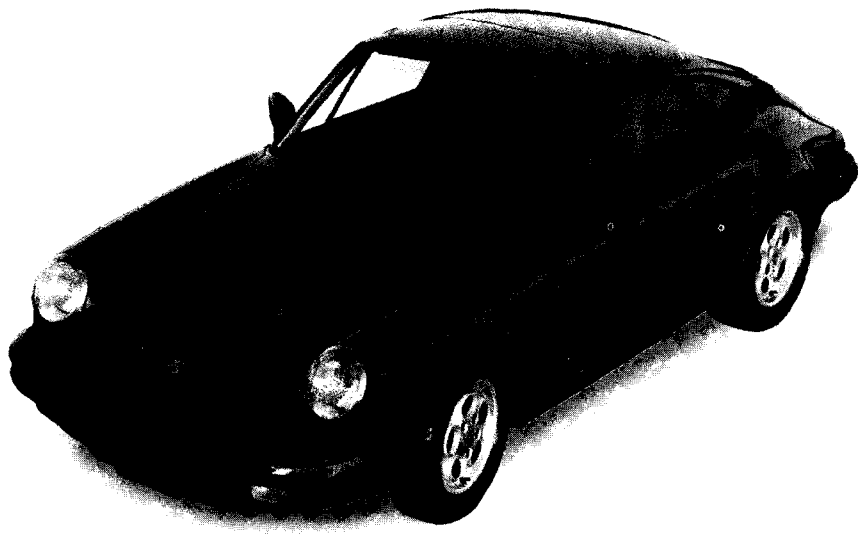
There are no secure figures on Nicaraguan political prisoners. Numbers range from a low of 4,300 (America's Watch and the Nicaraguan government) to the claim of Nicaraguan human rights and opposition groups that there are 9,500 being held with charges and several thousand more in clandestine state security prisons. The government has refused to publish a list and has denied the International Red Cross or human rights groups access to state security prisons. Political prisoners are tried by special tribunals composed of Sandinista militants. Since such tribunals are products of an emergency decree, they must be dissolved according to the Guatemala accord.

The most sensitive provision of the Guatemala accord is that vaguely suggesting the necessity to "carry out all constitutionally permitted actions necessary to achieve an effective cease-fire." Arias interpreted this as meaning negotiations between opposing parties. José Napoleón Duarte of El Salvador and Vinicio Cerezo Arevalo of Guatemala met directly with guerrilla representatives. Ortega refused to meet with the *contras*, even, as Arias later suggested, via the mediation of Obando y Bravo. Instead, the Sandinistas created three small cease-fire zones and sought, after softening them up with "local peace commissions," to negotiate with individual *contra* field commanders. At the same time, the Sandinistas proposed bilateral talks with the United States on the grounds that the *contras* were a proxy force. Again, the Sandinistas sought to use the provisions of the Guatemala accord to achieve this strategic goal—to divide and liquidate the *contras*.

Already the Sandinista leadership has made it evident that "peace" will not alter the character of Sandinista rule. In October the government announced a new draft call of 30,000. Vice President Sergio Ramírez explained that they were needed because of the *increased* threat of a U.S. invasion, should the *contras* be disbanded. The rationale is now in place for further restriction and for abrogation of recent reforms.

ORTEGA CAME to Washington not just to talk to the Organization of American States or even to speak to Wright, but to escape Arias. On his last night in the capital,

Where we got the idea that something small could be powerful.



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he tipped his hand: "It is not up to any individual or any president to determine who is complying with the Guatemala accords. It is up to the International Verification and Monitoring Commission." That is to say, not Arias or the other Central American presidents, but a commission that includes representatives of the Contadora countries, the Contadora support group, the United Nations, and the OAS, along with the Central Americans. Ortega knows that in that setting he has the votes.

His strategy is clear. With the help of the commission and of American Democrats, he will delay lifting the state of emergency and granting broad amnesty and the other democratic reforms stipulated in the Guatemala accords until the *contras* have been disbanded and defunded. Meanwhile, and for as long as Nicaragua's "democratic opening" is scrutinized, he will employ the block committees and the *turbas* in place of state security, the police, and the army. When asked in Washington if he wished to disassociate himself from Sandinista official statements in favor of mob violence, he proudly identified with the *turbas*. While the *turbas* prevent democracy from breaking out in Nicaragua, Ortega's alliance with Democrats like Jim Wright is designed to ward off Arias and any further diplomatic defeats.

Wright defended his behavior as an effort to "help the peace process along." But Ortega has an interesting view of how to bring peace to his country. The Miranda defection forced Daniel's brother, Humberto, to acknowledge a planned military buildup to 600,000. Ortega sought to get the OAS to refrain from any disciplinary action against Nicaragua unless approved by the U.N. In the U.N., Ortega knows he has the votes. This does not sound like a man who is preparing to observe the Guatemala accords. By pre-emptively attempting to defund the *contras*, by cooperating in the effort to undermine Arias's authority, Democratic leaders, like Wright and Dodd, appear to be assuming Sandinista non-compliance. They are insulating Congress, and a prospective vote to defund the *contras*, against a negative verdict from Arias.

At issue between Ortega and Arias is not just the venue for peace talks or the role of an international commission. They have fundamentally different views of how to bring peace, democracy, and development to the region. Arias believes that only by creating democratic structures for resolving disputes can the region overcome its heritage of outside interference and internecine warfare. Ortega wants peace first—i.e., disbanding the *contras*—and then he'll worry about democracy in Nicaragua.

Democrats who hailed the Guatemala accord as "Central America's Declaration of Independence" now appear willing to jeopardize Central American autonomy for their own factional purposes. Democrats who have opposed funding the *contras* on the grounds that it is an unwarranted American intermission into Central America's internal affairs will now have to choose. Will theirs be a principled support of the Arias plan and its effort to bring consistent democracy to Central America? Or will they support the Guatemala accord only as a way to defund the *contras* and score a victory over President Reagan? □

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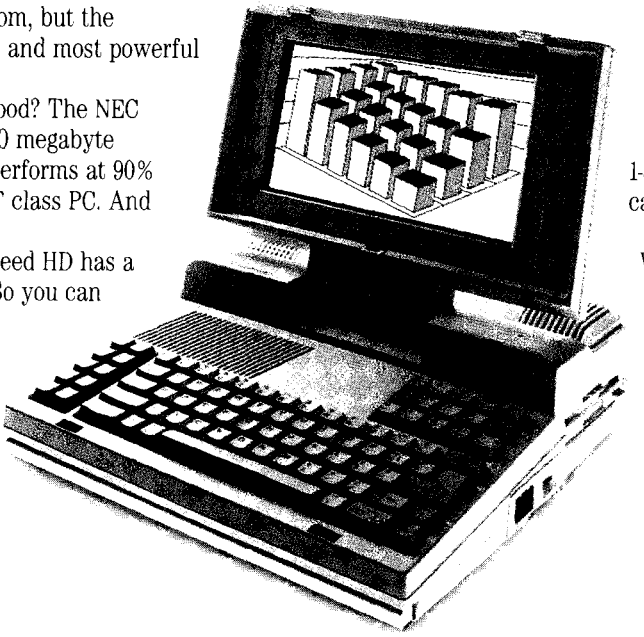

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STANLEY KAUFFMANN ON FILMS

Chinese Takeout; Star Trek

Marx and Freud have dominated Bernardo Bertolucci's career, for better and worse. Better: *Before the Revolution* and *The Tragedy of a Ridiculous Man*. Worse: *1900* and *Luna*. The twin deities apparently persuaded Bertolucci to choose his latest subject. The story of the Chinese emperor Pu Yi could hardly have swept Bertolucci off his feet as a drama. It's not a drama at all—Pu Yi was a victim, nothing more. But presumably the director saw a Freudian catalyst in the beginning of *The Last Emperor* and saw one face of Marxism in its conclusion, and these may have fixed him on the subject.

The Last Emperor
(Columbia)

Nuts
(Warner Bros.)

If the term "pathetic" can be applied to any emperor in world history, Pu Yi is the man. In 1908, at the age of three, he was taken from his high-born mother (who later killed herself) by his grandmother, the Dowager Empress, and brought to live in the Forbidden City, the huge imperial residence in Peking (as it then was). Within a few days the males between him and the throne died, and the child was named emperor. In 1912 a republic was declared, and the seven-year-old emperor abdicated. The child, now even more of a nominal ruler, wandered like a prisoner at large within the Forbidden City.

Marriage and concubines came along in time, as did expulsion from the palace and eventual residence in Manchuria, Pu Yi's place of origin. In 1931 the Japanese invaded Manchuria and established the empire of Manchukuo with Pu Yi as their puppet emperor—a front through whom they could rule. Pu Yi tried to establish parity with the Japanese and got into trouble. After the Second World War he and his wife wanted to flee to Japan but were intercepted by Soviet paratroopers and were turned over to the Chinese revolutionaries. Pu Yi then served ten years in a Chinese political prison at hard labor. When he was released, he worked as a gardener until his death in 1967.

The Freudian touches are of course the insecurities brought about by separation from his mother and by his loneliness as a child. We are even treated to some glimpses of his toilet training. His imprisonment at the end, during which he was not physically ill-treated, was seen by his Communist jailers as re-education so that, in time, he could take a useful place in society.

The sole personally initiated action in this long chronicle is his puny, quickly squelched rebellion against the Japanese. Everything else is reaction. Pu Yi's story isn't even poignant. Who can be moved by his story, who can think it sad? Edmond Rostand found some smidgen of poignancy in *L'Aiglon*, the story of Napoleon's son, who spent his short life trying to regain his father's throne, but even that story is now of diminished interest. Pu Yi is simply an eccentricity of history, worth a paragraph in the *Reader's Digest*, not a nearly three-hour film.

Apparently Bertolucci made it chiefly because he was empowered to make it. We're told that he approached the Chinese government with two projects to be done in China, Malraux's *Man's Fate* (once planned by Fred Zinnemann) and this story. The Chinese would not sanction the Malraux, so Bertolucci went ahead with this film rather than waste the chance to shoot in China. The questionable motive led to questionable filmmaking. *The Last Emperor* is slightly sophisticated De Mille, laden with sumptuous costumes and tours of the Forbidden City and mobs of people. Bertolucci had the use of extras on a scale far beyond the budget limits of Western filmmaking; it's a long time since I've seen such crowds on the screen, so many long lines of uniformed guards standing at attention. The Forbidden City is a prime travelogue subject, but neither the panoramas nor the choreographed crowds constitute a film.

The screenplay by the director and Mark Peploe tries to liven things up by cutting back and forth in time. The film begins in the Red Chinese prison, then goes to the three-year-old child and to other time planes, returning to the prison after flashbacks until it reaches "the present" and moves forward from the prison to the finish. This flitting doesn't help. When the puppet emperor's tennis game is interrupted by armed guards, there's no terror; when, in a dinner jacket, he sings "Am I Blue" at a lavish party, there's no humor; when, at the last, the bent old gardener buys a tourist's ticket of admission to his former palace, there's no pang. Even the very last bit, a guide taking American tourists through the throne room, is muffed, a toothless bite.

John Lone, the Chinese-American actor who was strange and forceful in *Iceman*, behaves credibly as (the adult) Pu Yi but has little chance to do anything other than behave credibly. Most of the roles are played by English-speaking Chinese actors, some of whom are effective. The only recognizable actor is Pe-

FILMS WORTH SEEING

House of Games. Gambling and other compulsions. David Mamet wrote and directed this seemingly realistic but abstract, imaginative work. First class. (Reviewed 11/16/87)

Manon of the Spring. Not a freestanding film. But as the sequel to *Jean de Florette*, it concludes the two-part story with high 19th-century drama. Yves Montand a grim peasant titan. (11/23/87)

Sammy and Rosie Get Laid. The title is much *more* brazen after the film. A fierce, funny, sexy account of Asian and black life in the inner city of London. Written and directed by the makers of *My Beautiful Laundrette*. Unique and strong. (11/30/87)

The Wannsee Conference. Terse reenactment of the meeting of Nazis in 1942 when the Final Solution was determined. Done in a businesslike, therefore soul-chilling way. (12/7/87)

SK

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ter O'Toole, as the emperor's British tutor. O'Toole, looking much more than 20 years older than he looked in 1967, tries to give the role flavor by over-articulating—enouncing "Scotland" as "Scot-land," for instance.

Bertolucci, hot or cold, extravagant or focused, was always visible in his films. Here he is invisible, swamped by pedestrian procedure. A controversial director has reached bottom—he has made a consistently boring film.

Nuts, a scraggly courtroom drama on Broadway in 1980, has been converted into a screenplay by its author, Tom Topor, along with Darryl Ponicsan and Alvin Sargent. More goes on in the film—flashbacks, scenes outside the courtroom—but it's still scraggly and, essentially, formulaic. The formula is the old one of the bond between the star and the audience from Moment One. The star in this case is a woman who is considered to be possibly insane, certainly troublesome and morally reprehensible. Nobody likes her except her parents. (And they're suspect.) We know from the start that the film will prove that the world is wrong and the woman is right. Why else would a star play the role?

Barbra Streisand is the star. The woman she plays is a prostitute charged with manslaughter. She is not a street person but a high-class call girl who comes from well-to-do middle-class parents. She killed a customer in her apartment when he flipped out and tried to strangle her. The legal action of the film is not the trial for manslaughter but a hearing to see if she is sane enough to stand trial.

We get what we expect: extenuating circumstances about the killing and explanations—through her family and marital history—of her life and character. All these are brought out by her lawyer, Richard Dreyfuss. The performances of the two stars come close to justifying the film's existence. Streisand, who converted this dissenter with *Yentl*, has rarely done the same sort of role twice, and here she reaches again. She plays a rankly hostile woman—draggy-looking much of the time—waiting patiently to justify our sympathy when the script will allow it, and she plays it all to the hilt. At moments the hilt even disappears. I don't understand why she opted for Jewish intonations and accent—dentilingual t's, for example—since her parents are Karl Malden and Maureen Stapleton, but on the whole this is bravely committed acting, far worthier than the script.

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Dreyfuss is zooming up the comeback trail. It's been well publicized that he went through a drug patch a few years ago; since then he has done *Tin Men* and *Stakeout* and now *Nuts*. Gray in thatch and beard, he gives an edgy, well-timed, humorous, nicely inflected performance, at times close to what Paul Newman might have done in the part—which is my idea of praise for realistic American acting.

Martin Ritt loves to direct. I don't suppose that he would do any script at all, but I'm glad he's not too choosy or he might not have done *Nuts*. (Streisand and Dreyfuss obviously counted for a lot with him.) Ritt is one of the most underrated American directors, superbly competent and quietly imaginative. Just one example. The moment of the judge's decision is shot from behind the judge's bench, looking down over his shoulder at Streisand and Dreyfuss at their table. It puts the scene in its complete judicial frame while it gives the point of the perspective to the two individuals most concerned. That's directing.

How Julian Schnabel turned bad painting into good money.

THE ARTIST AS ENTREPRENEUR

BY ROBERT HUGHES

SIX MONTHS AGO I took myself out of Julian Schnabel's memoirs. When Random House was circulating the manuscript in the hope of selling serial rights, an extract came my way from a friendly editor:

> At the beginning of the '80s things are hazy in my mind. . . . I remember some guy coming up to me, I think his name was Richie or Robbie Huge. I noticed he was wearing . . . a bow tie with a black leather jacket, although the tie was almost obscured by his triple chin. He whispered in my ear, "Could we go somewhere alone? Maybe to the wine bar and talk about you—I mean your work? I've always intended to write about it." I said, "Sure, let's talk." After some introductory flattery, his voice dropped down a tone. He whispered, "Will you chain me up?" I said, "I'm sorry Robbie, I'm not into that sort of stuff." His reaction was one of shame inflected with hate. In his sort of cockney accent, he said you'll pay for this one day. Reading his antisemetic [sic] babbling and personal attacks on me in Space magazine I found out he is a man of the world.

For Space, read *Time*.

Never having met Julian Schnabel, I began to wonder what were the elements from which he had concocted this "memory." Once I had a black leather jacket, but in 1973 my motorcycle was stolen from a sidewalk in SoHo and I gave the then-useless garment away to an art historian in Worcester, Massachusetts. (Fourteen years later an old photo of me wearing it on my lost hog appeared in *New York* magazine, where Schnabel presumably saw it.) And to be called anti-Semitic by a man who couldn't spell the word was weird enough, but what about those chains? I puzzled over them for days, until a friend, a scarred veteran of the psychoanalytic couch, pointed out that this mystifying passage could only record Schnabel's own desire to "chain up"—that is, to silence—any skeptic who doubts his genius.

I rang the publishers. There was a sound of foreheads being clutched. The paragraph was cut. Thus *CVJ* lost its one and only spicy bit, though perhaps not its only fictional one.

CVJ: Nicknames of Maitre D's & Other Excerpts from Life
by Julian Schnabel
(Random House, 222 pp., $75)

Julian Schnabel: Paintings 1975-1987
essays by Thomas McEvilley and Lisa Phillips
(Whitechapel Art Gallery, 112 pp., 44 illus., $20 paper)

"Julian Schnabel"
The Whitney Museum of American Art
(November 6 to January 10)

The unexamined life, said Socrates, is not worth living. The memoirs of Julian Schnabel, such as they are, teach that the converse is also true. The unlived life is not worth examining. Writing his memoirs at 35, Schnabel has set some kind of record for premature retrospection, at least among artists. No wonder he needs to invent. "It's sort of a cross between Charles Dickens and Gertrude Stein," he told one reporter. But the only Steinian thing about *CVJ* is that it rambles, and there is nothing Dickensian about it at all. It is the art world's answer to *Vanna Speaks*, without the girlish modesty.

For Schnabel is nothing if not a celebrity—a minor one by the standards of the mass media, but quite a big fish in the art pond. If his is not a household name like Picasso, Pollock, or Warhol, it is not for lack of trying; indeed, in the last years of his life Andy had Schnabel at his feet, looking up, missing nothing. "The hall of Fame," wrote a 19th-century wag,

> is high and wide,
> The waiting-room is full,
> And some go in through the door marked *Push*,
> And some through the door marked *Pull*.

As a true self-constructed American, Schnabel chose the former. He has been propelled by a manic, painfully sincere belief in his own present genius, and in his future historical importance. Between writers and readers, this lapel-grabbing has dubious value as a promotional tactic; in any case, it never works for long. (After their second books, who will persuade the discriminating reader that anything worthwhile will ever come from Jay McInerney, Tama Janowitz, and the other Bright Young Dwarfs of lower Manhattan, whose media-struck careers so closely resemble Schnabel's?) But the American art system is more plagued by inflation, and more vitiated by fashion, than the American literary world. A book confers no status on its owner; a painting may.

There is a crack of doubt in the soul of every collector. In it lurks the basilisk whose gaze paralyzes taste: the fear that today's klutz may turn out to be tomorrow's Picasso. Thus nothing except the manifestly out-of-date may be rejected with impunity. This hardy little reptile was particularly active at the moment Schnabel came on the scene. In the first half of the 1980s, riding the bull market, the demand for hot, young, new, exciting, contemporary art shot through the ceiling. All of a sudden, scores and

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Robert Hughes is the art critic for *Time*.

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then hundreds of the very new rich—arbs, developers, soap-opera producers, agents, admen, all manner of important folk whose uncertainty in cultural matters matched their socioeconomic vanity—decided that, being amply entitled to Everything Now, they would also become "major" art collectors.

THIS WAVE had been rearing up, far out on the horizon, for a long time. The prescient could see it coming with the Robert and Ethel Scull auction in the mid-'70s. But it hit the beach in 1982. The emblematic moment was, to be precise, August 13, 1982. On that day the Dow jumped 40 points and started its now legendary five-year run. Its tsunami-like surge transformed the contemporary art market beyond recognition, just as its reflux, signaled just as clearly by the crash of 1987, will transform it again, leaving a dreadful litter of drowned reputations in the sand. (It is still too early to know what the bears will do to the market; the price of a Van Gogh, or even a Jasper Johns, is not a guide to the market stability of reputations made only yesterday.)

Most of the aspiring collectors, some of whom would duly end up on museum boards, or even with their own private museums, could not have told you the difference between a Cézanne watercolor and a drawing by Parmigianino. Their historical memory went back as far as early Warhol, where it tended to stop. Their sense of the long continuities of art was, to put it tactfully, attenuated. Insofar as they thought about the matter, they were apt to see 20th-century art history as a series of neatly packaged attacks launched at the frowning ramparts of "tradition"—first the Fauves, then the Cubists, then the Expressionists, then the Constructivists, and so on, to Abstract Expressionism and Pop. This reflex, applied to the present, meant they all bought essentially the same painting by the same artists—a herd instinct that explains the monotony to which one is condemned when passing from one new collection in Beverly Hills to the next.

By the time this new class of rich fashion-victims irrupted into the market, the old scenario of avant-garde confrontation had already collapsed in America, whose entire cultural life was based on models of diversity and novelty. The struggles of the avant-garde, as enacted, say, in Max Beckmann's Germany or Wyndham Lewis's London, had dissolved in the '60s and '70s into some-

continued on page 28

DORIS LESSING

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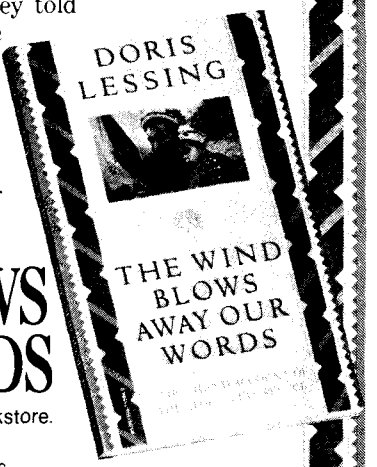

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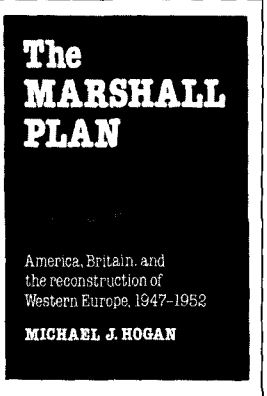

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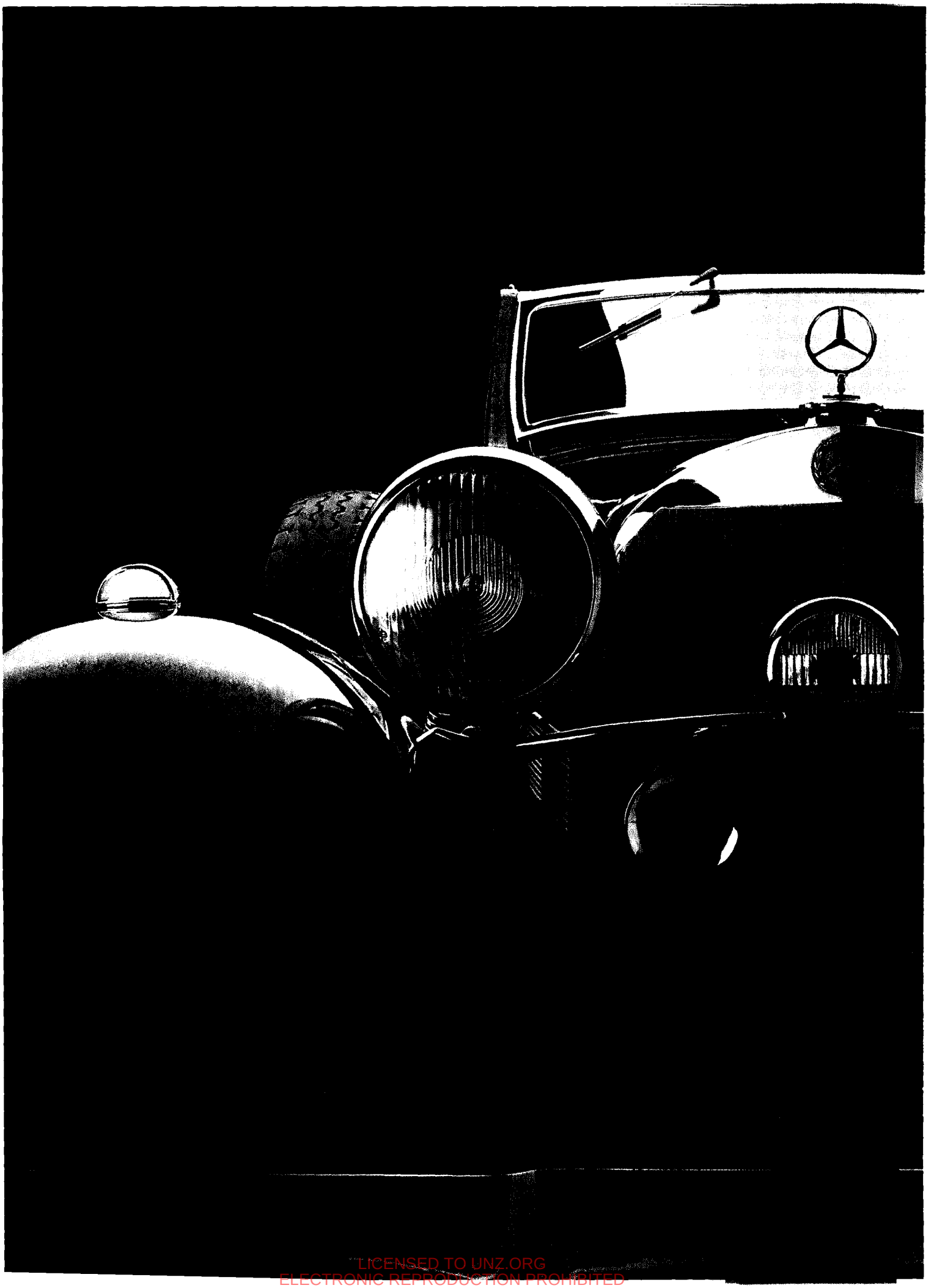

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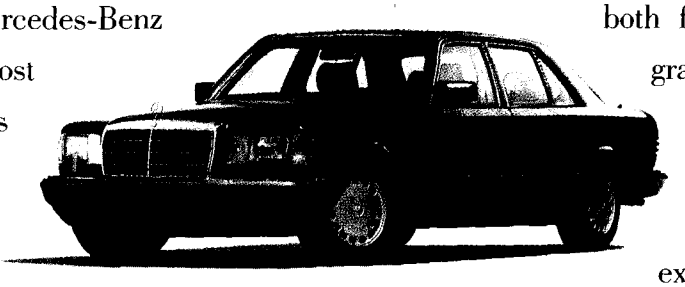

The 540K, for example, thundered into legend on the power of a supercharged eight-cylinder engine and the flamboyance of low-slung roadster coachwork. Half a century of technological progress later, the S-Class seems to glide rather than thunder over the road; in the case of the flagship 560SEL Sedan on the roads of its native Europe, two tons of S-Class authority, capable of gliding along at 142 mph all day.

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thing much more rationally American, more suited to a middlebrow culture that had come to believe in the therapeutic and educative powers of art. "Modernism" was telescoped into "newness," and newness was promoted as a value in itself. The art market embraced the aesthetics of Detroit, a new model with styling changes every year, and "radical" restyling every five or so. We see this still, as hot Neo-Expressionism is gradually nudged off the showroom floor by the hotter (because cooler) footnotes to Minimal art and the Duchampian ready-made that, for want of any "movement" name, go under the meaningless label of "Neo-Geo."

In the early '80s, however, the action lay with recycled Expressionism. This was where Schnabel came in. New collectors had been raised on folk-myths of the totally expressive artist as scapegoat or hero—Van Gogh and his ear, Pollock and his booze, Rothko slitting his wrists, Joseph Beuys wrapped in felt and fat beside his crashed Stuka. After the *cuisine minceur* of the '70s, a time of small pebbles on floors and sheets of typing paper on gallery walls, they were aching for something hot and heavy. They got it in abundance from Schnabel's panels encrusted with broken plates à la Gaudi and antlers à la Beuys, his heavy surfaces of tarpaulin, horsehide, and velvet choked with slimy pigment, his incoherent layering of "mythic" imagery.

The art looked "radical" without being so; it was merely novel, a quality that soon outwears itself. In 1980, however, the uncertainty of new-market taste was such that if someone stood up to assert loudly and repeatedly that he was a genius, there was a chance he would be believed. This was the strategy of Schnabel and his first dealers, Mary Boone and Leo Castelli; it worked brilliantly. In fact it was a walkover, like Lawrence's rear attack on Aqaba when the guns were all pointing out to sea. Everyone wanted a genius. In Schnabel they got the genius they deserved.

THERE WAS a more than accidental correspondence between Schnabel's success in meeting the nostalgia for big macho art in the early '80s and Sylvester Stallone's restoration of American *virtù* in the character of Rambo. Indeed, one might say that Schnabel's work is to painting what Stallone's is to acting, except that Schnabel makes bigger claims for himself. Grace Glueck interviewed him for the *New York Times* and recorded his solemn opinion that his "peers" were "Duccio, Giotto, and Van Gogh." One might suppose that such displays of invulnerable conceit would have turned Schnabel into a figure of fun overnight. In England they did—a fact that Schnabel, in a recent interview with the editors of *Flash Art*, sagaciously attributed to "a history of philistinism in England from Shakespeare to George Bernard Shaw and Evelyn Waugh."

But the American art world, despite its recent fixation on "irony," does not have much sense of humor: too much is at stake to entertain the thought that a hero might be a buffoon. Like the political analysts who insisted, only a year ago, that Ronald Reagan's "image" would never succumb to the truth of his dimwittedness, some art critics persist in treating Schnabel as though his fame were a given fact of culture, which no perception of the ineptitude of his work can alter. "No one expected him," Thomas McEvilley pants in his essay in the catalog of the Schnabel retrospective that opened at the Whitney Museum this month. "No one knew they wanted him. Yet somehow the age demanded him. . . . There is nothing anyone can do about it." The notion that this man is an emanation of the zeitgeist matches his fantasies about himself. It even has a

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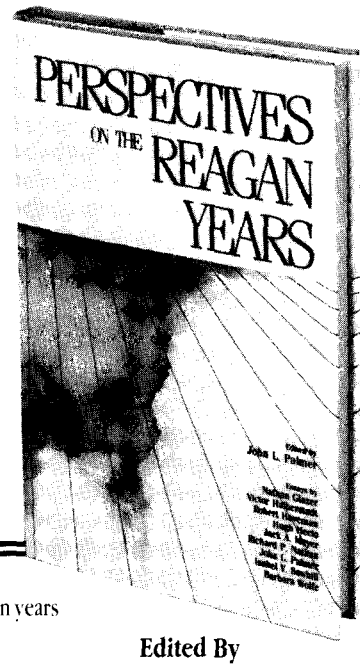

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small truth, since only a culture as sodden with hype as America's in the early '80s could have underwritten his success.

Still, there are problems built into the system: its volatility, and its short memory. Given its mass-market conditions, the art world of the early '80s closely resembled the fashion industry. Things, as it happened, went down as well as up. Careers rose like the space shuttle, amid roars of acclamation and pillars of smoke—and then, like Challenger, detonated. Who now remembers graffiti, the hot ticket of '83? Or Jean-Michel Basquiat, who in his early 20s was being promoted as the "black Picasso" and made it onto the cover of the *New York Times Magazine*? Out to limbo almost all of them go, to the land of Nod, to that elephants' graveyard of the formerly new that one imagines existing somewhere in the marshes of New Jersey, to join the second-generation acrylic-on-duck painting of the '70s and the talking refrigerators of the '60s: permanently remaindered.

TO ESCAPE (or at least to stave off) this fate, which looms larger as the market becomes jammed with a teeming proletariat of emergent artists—a mass from which trends can be condensed more or less at will—a painter must hammer in his pitons and quickly scale the museum system: the lavishly illustrated book, the traveling retrospective. Hence the steady pressure from the market on museums to hold full-dress "retrospective" exhibitions of work by artists still in their 30s. This practice would have struck an earlier generation of American museum staff as absurd, if not macabre.

The whole point of a "retrospective" used to be, first, that it was an unusual honor, setting a long-meditated and hard-won vision into the disinterested historical matrix that the museum was meant to supply, so that, second, a life's work could be seen whole. Today you can be, like David Salle, ten years out of art school and still get your "retrospective" at the Whitney—and, in Schnabel's case, at the Whitechapel Art Gallery in London, the Centre Pompidou in Paris, the Houston Museum of Fine Arts, and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art as well. The tinkle of his broken plates—they have lately developed the irksome habit of falling off the paintings, so that he now employs a factotum to fly about America and glue them back on—is heard from sea to shining sea.

A rum business, this end of the con-

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temporary art market. To tease out properly its strands of idealism, fraud, sanctimony, folly, enthusiasm, and nervous bluff, to describe its machinery and the characters who tend it, would challenge the powers of Balzac or Trollope. If Schnabel, in writing his memoirs, had tried to take the reader down to the engine room, if he had written about process rather than product, he might have produced a text of some documentary interest. Alas, nothing of the kind occurred. *CVJ* is a celebrity bio of the most banal sort, and its writing is little more than gray grout around the big color reproductions of his pictures.

PRESUMABLY he wrote some of this book himself. More likely, he filled a few tapes and left it to editors and scribes to put his ruminations into some kind of order. Poor ghosts: they failed, and no wonder. Schnabel's style of discourse has points of resemblance with his painting; it is a stew of mixed metaphors and rhetorical gristle, thickened with unparsable gibberish that would break the point of any editorial pencil. ("The disparity between the reflectiveness of the plates and the paint were in disagreement with each other.") *CVJ*—the initials are supposed to stand for a private term of endearment between Schnabel and his Belgian wife—has no beginning and no end, only a disjointed middle, a string of maundering art world anecdotes, stilted attempts at aphorism, and peevish attacks on much better painters such as Eric Fischl. (David Salle, with whom Schnabel always used to be bracketed, is not mentioned at all; when the titans of the early '80s fall out, they pout but they do not speak.)

Schnabel writes about great art (Van Gogh's, Vermeer's, Goya's, and of course his own) in solemn terms of unconscious parody. His aesthetic responses are remarkably meager. Most of the time art is a pretext for striking an attitude. Looking at a Vermeer "is like when you go to the movies and the lights go out and you become invisible before the film comes on. . . . This affords you the luxury of dying with a grin on your face"—like Bogey, presumably, in the Sierra Madre. On the other hand, the sight of a Van Gogh drawing

> made me feel like I was standing on Houston Street in late November, when the temperature has just changed; I don't have a scarf and a friend has canceled a dinner appointment with me. I have nowhere to go. I feel the air go through me. I have a sense of my own twilight.

Poor Vincent, who labored so that this Texan culture starlet, 100 years later, may feel he has forgotten his scarf and, worse, been stood up for dinner!

Schnabel may feel the air go through him, but we must listen to it, flatulent self-congratulation mingled with affectless chitchat about other artists and art people. He does not like many of them much. Clement Greenberg, "one of the most destructive, inane, positivistic, and stifling forces against the growth of art in this country," makes a cameo appearance in the Los Angeles airport (mercifully not in black leather) so that Schnabel can preen himself on flying first class while the wicked old guru, who seems not to like his work at all, flies coach. Schnabel has no good stories. That is because he is so self-absorbed that nobody else seems altogether real. "Good conversation is scarce," he complains, without stopping to reflect why, around him, this might be so, "and there are so few people who know how to make art." Indeed; and one fewer than he thinks.

SCHNABEL'S narrative tends toward existentialist farce, like the diary of a mooning, callow American who can't speak any foreign languages and has discovered *L'Etranger*:

> I took a train to a public swimming pool in the suburbs of Madrid. I watched teenagers making dates for later that night. I watched families watching each other. There was no way to enter into their lives. I went to the movies a lot. I saw *Last Tango in Paris* three times in the same day. In three days I had finished a bottle of Valium and in almost a week hadn't spoken to anyone.

"No way to enter into their lives." What did he expect the Madrilenos to do, drop their babies, drag him inside, ply him with roast suckling pig?

But at least his exercises in self-pity are less foolish than his claims to tragic elevation. He describes his plate-paintings in terms of "parents screaming on *Kristallnacht*, as their voices are lost as they were being dragged down the streets of Berlin while pieces of shattered glass glistened in the moonlight; or after some great violent act. The plates seemed to have a sound, the sound of every violent human tragedy . . . . All of this was happening before I even started to paint the painting." One does not need to be a Jew to be repelled by Schnabel's facile appropriation of that tragedy. If broken plates really did "mean" *Kristallnacht*, how could he bear to use them in his society portraits, in his crude renderings of Texan millionairesses and Beverly Hills producers? But they don't mean anything of the sort. They are just bombast and texture—a fresh "look" that found its temporary spot in the Academy of the Briefly New, and promptly became a cliché.

In Schnabel's rhetoric, one glimpses a mangled form of popular modernist cliché: the artist as thaumaturgic hero, as the Outsider locked in Oedipal battle with the past. The book contains advice to the young; Schnabel inveighs against "signaturization," against the reliance on a brand-image—this from the plate man!—and speaks harshly about careerism, at least in others. The young painter may give his elders the benefit of his freshness, but he must shun their influence, lest he sully the miraculous originality of his vision:

> Never listen to anybody . . . . It's a mistake for young artists to want to please older ones. They're going to make you take out of your paintings the very things that most characterize them as yours. . . . You can't listen to them because nobody knows better than you what you need to do. Most older artists are going to try to get you to conform to the standards that you are out to destroy anyway.

That, in a nutshell, is why Schnabel has never learned to draw: his development was smothered by his impregnable self-esteem.

IF YOU want to know what went wrong with the education provided by many an American art school in the '70s, Schnabel's career is instructive. With scarcely an exception, every significant artist of the last hundred years, from Seurat to Matisse, from Picasso to Mondrian, from Beckmann to de Kooning, was drilled (or drilled himself) in "academic" drawing—the long tussle with the unforgiving and real motif that, in the end, proved to be one of the main bases on which the great formal achievement of Modernism could be raised. Only in this way was the right to radical distortion within a continuous tradition earned, and its results raised above the level of improvising play. This kind of rigor had been leached out of American art education by the 1970s, when Schnabel went to school in Houston, and it is quite plain from his student efforts (which are not in the Whitney's "retrospective," of course) that he had no talent as a formal draftsman: the weak lumpish silhouettes, the kitsch-expressionist faces with their poached-egg eyes, the clumsy line,

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and the inability to relate a form to the space around it by the energy of its contour were all there from the beginning.

In short, because there was never a time when he could draw, there was no moment at which he jettisoned his skill in the interest of some fiction of "rawness," or "primitive intensity." The cack-handedness is not feigned, but real. Even when he has an original to copy, as in the Caravaggio youth with a fruit basket quoted in *Exile* (1980), it is done with such paint-by-numbers awkwardness as to be embarrassing. The paintings that carry some conviction are those in which Schnabel makes no attempt to draw a figure or a motif, but contents himself with a murky, nostalgic sort of Abstract Expressionist splashing; the best of these (not in the show) is *Rest* (1982), a brusquely painted board supported like a retable on a T-beam of wooden balks, in the Saatchi Collection in London.

Schnabel is a most eclectic artist; what you see is what he was looking at last. It is bad luck that a show by Michael Tracy, an older Texan painter with whom he was associated in the '70s, should have opened in New York at the same time as Schnabel's. In Tracy's lush imagery—always on the edge of religious hysteria, choked with ex-votos riven by knives, pierced with bronze nails, and suffused by sadomasochistic references to the *penitente* cults of the Southwest—one sees the real condition of emotional overload that Schnabel's work mimics but cannot make formal sense of. Likewise, his recent letterings on tarpaulin, such as *Saint Ignatius Loyola* (1986), are little more than replays of the work of Salvatore Scarpitta.

A list of Schnabel's "sources" would be long, as would a catalog of the images he has "appropriated" in his search for the stuff of major statements. Both, however, would be tedious. Perhaps, given the art industry's need for dissertations that amplify the hum of myth, McEvilley's catalog introduction will not be the last piece of prose devoted to the exegesis of Schnabel's pictorial blather: "The brown bible wandering like a melon vine or a cancerous tumor across the page of the children's book is the sign of involvement in natural process, of the endless growth and change of things that will not stand still for human objects." Enough, already. The strongest symbol embedded in this conjuncture of show and book is the timing. Did the Whitney Museum and Random House really mean to celebrate Thanksgiving by serving up this turkey?

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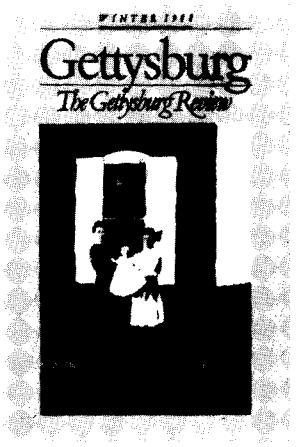

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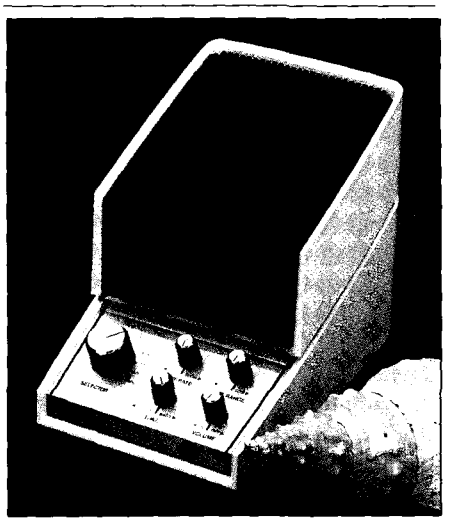

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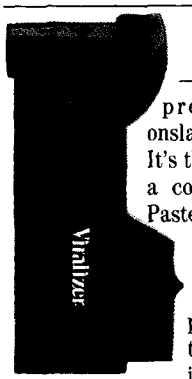

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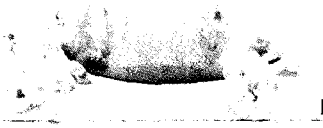

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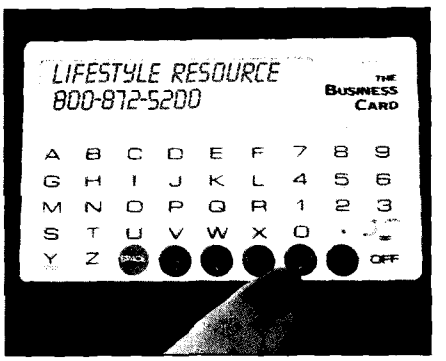

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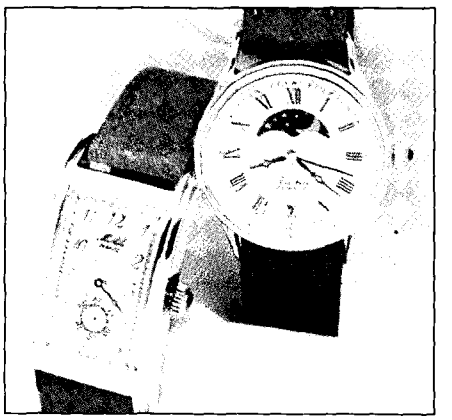

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Language And Loss

The Penguin Book of Modern Yiddish Verse edited by Irving Howe, Ruth R. Wisse, and Khone Shmeruk

(Viking, 719 pp., $29.95)

What's a nice Irish Catholic boy like Donoghue up to, reading *The Penguin Book of Modern Yiddish Verse*? He has no Yiddish and no Hebrew, he reads Jewish poetry in English translation, and even then only when he happens to meet a Jewish poet—Yehuda Amichai twice, T. Carmi once—and wonders what kinds of poetry these men write. He has worked through Stanley Burnshaw's *The Modern Hebrew Poem Itself*, but mainly because he counts Burnshaw a valued friend and wants to understand his mind. One supposes that Donoghue has read Irving Howe's *World of Our Fathers*, and that he can at least see in the new Penguin anthology evidence of the historical and social experience of the Eastern European Jews recounted in Howe's several books. But surely that is not enough to make a qualified reader. Donoghue should disqualify himself, lacking every competence except goodwill.

True, true. And if the whole truth were told, my disabilities are far more extensive than those confessed. Maybe I should declare them, even now. I am bewildered by the accounts of Jewish experience that I receive from certain Jewish intellectuals. I have never understood, for instance, how Hannah Arendt could maintain, as she does in her essay "Creating a Cultural Atmosphere" (in *The Jew as Pariah*), that the process of secularization "transformed religious concepts and the results of religious speculation in such a way that they received new meaning and new relevance independent of faith." This happy transformation she calls Culture, and deems it "by definition secular," on the consideration that "it requires a kind of broadmindedness of which no religion will ever be capable." I don't know what she means. I take religion to be a revelation; it is not a matter of concepts and speculations. A religion "independent of faith" is meaningless to me.

If I were a Jew, I would take no consolation from the transformation of my faith into Culture, especially if that article were identified with Enlightenment and promoted as postbiblical. If a Catholic rejects his faith, he puts up with the consequence. He regards himself as a lapsed Catholic, but he doesn't endow his spiritual state with a compensatory aura, or claim that he has advanced to a higher grade of being. He may, like Joyce's Stephen Dedalus, represent his rejection to himself and others as a Promethean act. He may shout: "*Non serviam*." But what he takes pride in is the isolation and the risk of his stance; he doesn't claim for it, as Arendt claims for secular Culture, some universal or exemplary privilege.

I don't understand, either, why Jacques Derrida's claims about Jewish experience are rarely questioned. In essays on the French-Jewish poet Edmond Jabès and the French-Jewish philosopher Emmanuel Levinas, Derrida says that God chose to go silent and to give his truth a written form, the Tables of the Law. By doing so, God constituted human experience as absence, and gave it to the Jews in that fated, speechless form. According to this paradigm, exile is the categorical human state; the sentiment of presence or self-identity is an illusion, and meaning is endlessly postponed. As Levinas says, "God is made real, not through incarnation but, rather, through the Law." Further: "To love the Torah more than God . . . is protection against the madness of direct contact with the Sacred without the mediation of reason."

The gist of Derrida's gloss on Levinas and Jabès is to prescribe as categorically human—not just as Jewish—the addition of interminable heretical commentary to the Jewish text of exile, absence, and severance. But I can't imagine what it would mean to love the Torah more than God. I could love the Torah only as the sign of the voice and presence of God. But I am a Christian, a follower of Christ, God incarnate, who lived and spoke but did not write a book. How should I take Derrida's claim that a rabbinic play of mind, secular of course, on certain Judaic texts is the fateful epitome of human life?

I have much the same problem with Harold Bloom, whose theory of poetic influence is a secular version of rabbinic commentary on sacred texts. Jabès's *Le Livre des Questions* has this sentence: "God is a questioning of God." Attributed to the fictional Reb Arwas, the assertion (which I find monstrously arrogant) might be taken as a motto in reading Bloom. What is his antithetical reading, his "strong reader" or "strong poet," but the practice of an endlessly haggling relation to a God not acknowledged on faith, but maintained by the haggling? Bloom cannot understand any relation to God that is predicated by faith, by trust, by submission. It strikes me that his campaign against Eliot is owed mainly to the otherwise inescapable fact of Eliot's Christianity, and to the force of his submission to that faith. Because Eliot does not haggle with Virgil or Dante, Bloom calls him weak.

I could go on. But maybe I've declared enough bewilderment.

It is my impression that the editors of the Penguin anthology are mainly concerned with these Yiddish poems as marks of the conditions that the poets had to meet. The story begins with the pogroms that followed the assassination of Alexander II of Russia on March 1, 1881, and it is an appalling "story of the night" from then to now. Many of the poets of the generation that followed left Russia and Poland and came to America in the 1920s and '30s. Some who remained in Europe died in the Warsaw ghetto in 1942. Others were executed by Stalin on August 12, 1952. Of the survivors, a number went to Israel, many came to New York, Philadelphia, Chicago.

There is, I find, an occasional equivocation: some poems are included not because they amount to much as poems, but because they testify to the social forces that incited them. Still, the Penguin anthology documents a century in the history of a culture, not to be identified with the secular Culture that Arendt prescribed; it is a far more diverse story of faith and the loss of it, of worldly conditions and necessities, of old values not entirely disowned. The editors are tender to a lost cause, and alert to the forces that made Yiddish poetry nearly impossible.

I am surprised and pleased, reading this collection, to find so many poems resisting the process of secularization that Arendt approved. I don't know how typical these poems are, but there are many, like Kadya Molodovsky's "God of Mercy," that remain preoccu-

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pied with the God they rebuke:

O God of mercy
For the time being
Choose another people.
We are tired of death, tired of corpses,
We have no more prayers.

There are even poems that might have been written by a lapsed Catholic, the shadow of his God pursuing him, as in Aaron Zeitlin's "To Be a Jew":

Being a Jew means running forever to God
even if you are His betrayer,
means expecting to hear any day,
even if you are a naysayer,
the blare of Messiah's horn;
means, even if you wish to,
you cannot escape His snares,
you cannot cease to pray—
even after all the prayers,
even after all the "evens."

There are many poems too that, separating themselves from faith, don't make a virtue of secularization. For example, in Yankev Fridman's "God No Longer Speaks" it is clear that he still in some sense does speak:

Our forefathers could hear God's words,
but we write hidden poems
to hide our naked longing for God's breath,
more silent than the breath of stars
over sleeping wintertime lakes.

In fact, few of these poems have escaped or cut themselves loose from the sentiment of longing for "the old ways," as Yisroel-Yakken Schwartz's poem "The Climb Up" documents them. The severance between past and present, as in Gabriel Preil's "Eternal Now," is evidently a more painful state for Jews than I have been led to believe. Even a poet as jaunty as Moyshe-Leyb Halpern in "The Will" travels with a load of old affiliations he can't quite dismiss. No wonder so many Yiddish poems are turned on grandfathers more than on fathers; it takes two generations to clarify certain losses. As in Izi Kharik's "Pass On":

Tired and fearful, do you look about you
And feel a frightened trembling in your knees?
Who knows, who knows whether these sons
Will still survive, these sons, as Jews?
There is a frightened trembling in your knees.

Inevitably, the elegiac note is often heard in this book, along with the fervor that turns defeat into a kind of victory. Aaron Zeitlin is especially given to this turn; in "Six Lines" he claims aesthetic victory for appearances that, in any other light, would count as defeat:

I know that in this world no one needs me,
me, a word-beggar in the Jewish graveyard.
Who needs a poem, especially in Yiddish?

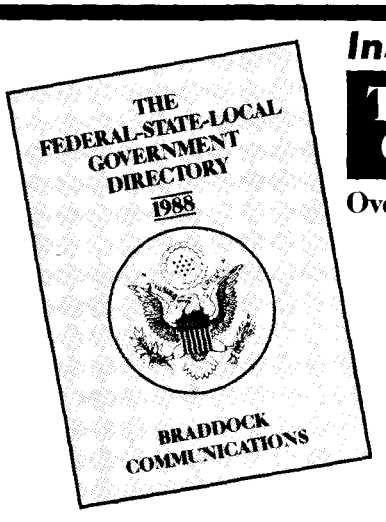
Only what is hopeless on this earth has beauty
and only the ephemeral is godly
and humility is the only true rebellion.

I shouldn't give the impression, especially to gentile readers such as myself, that every poem in the Penguin anthology must be read in a synagogue. I would emphasize the devout and the blasphemous poems, in reaction against Arendt's paradigm by which such sentiments are supposed to have been transformed into worldliness. Many of the poems in the book, in fact, make a perennial poetry, not timeless but continuous in time; they might have issued from virtually any experience of being alive in the world. When Malka Heifetz Tussman writes:

The rain is yours.
I have been through my rainstorms

Gather me up
like wheat

I don't feel obliged to translate the rainstorm into a distinctively Jewish grief, or to think that a Jewish "gathering" dif-



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fers from any other kind. We are free to read the poem as we would read a similar poem by, say, H. D. or Josephine Miles. I don't think I'm missing any occult reference in Rokhl Korn's "On the Other Side of the Poem" by construing the orchard, pine tree, yellow bird, mother and child as if I had come upon them in another poem. Perhaps the "three watchmen who never speak, standing guard" mean more than I can say, but for the most part it is a perennial poem of childhood. Like many of the poems we treasure, Korn's poem issues from that fundamental sense of life that, for Jew and gentile alike, testifies to our creaturely presence in the world.

Such poems don't float free of time, but they are patient in the presence of apparently relentless change. Northrop Frye calls these universal experiences, and the mode of being that they constitute, "mythological," and he takes myth as subsuming what I call a perennial poetry. When one type of experience is sharply distinguished from the fundamental or primordial, he calls the differentiations ideological, and he would locate on the level of ideology the factors that separate Jew from gentile. It is edifying to find so many Yiddish poems acknowledging a "first world," and letting secondary or ideological differences obtrude thereafter.

ONE ASPECT of Yiddish poetry in the Penguin anthology disappoints me. I would have expected the poems to speak of a remarkably wide range of feelings, but that is not, with a few notable exceptions, the impression they give. They seem to be prejudiced in favor of a few cardinal themes, as if recourse to a dream of other worlds would constitute a scandal. I realize that a prejudice is necessary before one can see anything, but these poems seem to have only a few ways of seeing what they see.

The poets who strike me as calling on an unusually wide imaginative range are Moyshe-Leyb Halpern, Jacob Glatstein, and Itsik Manger. Glatstein speaks with evident authority and comprehensiveness in "Without Jews":

Without Jews, no Jewish God.
If, God forbid, we should quit
this world, Your poor tent's light
would out.
Abraham knew You in a cloud:
since then, You are the flame
of our face, the rays
our eyes blaze,
our likeness
whom we formed:
in every land and town
a stranger.
Shattered Jewish skulls,
shards of the divine,
smashed, shamed pots—
these were Your light-bearing vessels,
Your tangibles,
Your portents of miracle!
Now count these heads
by the millions of the dead.
Around You the stars go dark.
Our memory of You, obscured.
Soon Your reign will close.
Where Jews sowed,
a scorched waste.

I have no difficulty in imagining the feelings that go with the breaking of the vessels, the appalling correlation of skulls and pots. Or in standing, speechlessly, beside " 'The Lovers of Israel' at the Belzhets Death Camp," in Manger's poem of that name, where three famous Hasidic rabbis denounce God:

Creator of worlds, Thou art mighty and great,
But we Galician Jews forever erase
Your name from the list of true Lovers of Israel.

As for Halpern, he seems to me the most daringly comprehensive of all the poets in the book. He can do anything: ballads, lyrics, satires, with sudden shifts

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of tone, as if he refused to be bound by the decorum of the genres he willingly practiced. Fourteen of his poems are included. Perhaps "Memento Mori" is a bit theatrical, the repetition—"Who would be able to believe Moyshe-Leyb?"—too self-regarding to be wholesome. But he has taken possession of so much experience, and in so many tones, that an occasional bit of strutting seems a venial fault. In "The Bird" the effect of the leading metaphor is precisely the opposite: it steadies and restrains the sense of horror.

IN THE ESSAY I have already quoted, Arendt wrote that "the rescue of the Yiddish writers of Eastern Europe is of great importance; otherwise they will remain lost to culture generally." More specifically, she said that these writers "form the only basis of culture that we have got; a basis we shall have to extend gradually in both directions: the secularization of religious tradition and rescue from folklore of the great artists (mostly Yiddish) of secular folk life." I assume that the Penguin anthology is part of such a rescue operation. The editors speak of it, in an excellent introduction, as if it were a last-minute effort to save a noble remnant. I am not sure whether they have in mind mainly the decline of Yiddish as a spoken language, or the loss of the values—social, religious, ethical—maintained in Jewish speech and writing: perhaps there is no difference between the two forms of loss.

In this respect *The Penguin Book of Modern Yiddish Verse* is comparable to *The New Oxford Book of Irish Poetry* and other such anthologies. Irish as a vernacular language was lost, over a comparatively short time, in the chief towns and few cities: it was driven to remote villages along the western seaboard, where its survival is now in doubt. But it has gained new life among educated people, mostly in Dublin, Cork, and Galway. It is probable that more Irish is spoken, by choice, by students in these university towns than by native speakers in the Gaeltacht. Some of this educated Irish, like the Irish heard on radio and television, is impure, in the sense that it incorporates bits of English, the small change of daily reference. Irish being a minority language, the educated people who speak it form a kind of society, high in the social scale and opaque to outsiders. They have their own newspapers, magazines, publishing houses, radio programs, and a fit audience, if few. So

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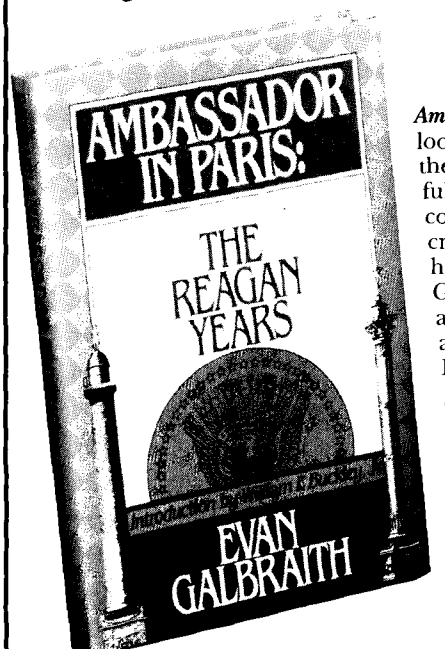

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while the fortunes of Irish, in any large-scale consideration, are poor, the language is in a better state now than it has been for a long time—though we envy the provenance of Hebrew in Israel.

I'm not sure how close a comparison between modern Irish and modern Hebrew might go. And of course Irish does not have anything corresponding to the distinction between Hebrew and Yiddish. The same language includes the most casual lingua franca and the most elaborate forms of poetry. Irish is fortunate in one respect: as a Celtic language, it is so different from English—in vocabulary, in grammar, in syntax—that there is no fear of its being lost in the otherwise dominant language of Empire. I take that luck so seriously that I can't conceive of giving it up.

So I am dismayed (my last bewilderment) to find Cynthia Ozick proposing, in *Art & Ardor*, a New Yiddish in English. "When Jews poured Jewish ideas into the vessel of German they invented Yiddish." I presume what was poured was not merely ideas. Besides, the relation between a language and the values it "contains" is not accurately described as that between a vessel and its contents. "If we make out of English a new Yiddish, then we can fashion a Yavneh not only for our own renewal but as a demonstration for our compatriots." This seems to me the linguistic correlative of Arendt's program: go secular, create Culture, and let your Culture be in English. Ozick points to *Mr. Sammler's Planet* as an example of "a Jewish liturgical literature written in English." Certainly it is a splendid novel, but just as certainly there is nothing liturgical about it. And I can't warm to the notion that the appalling history of the Jews since 1881 was suffered so that one day Saul Bellow would write English with a distinctive accent.

DENIS DONOGHUE

Denis Donoghue is the author most recently of *Reading America* (Knopf).

MAGGIEMARCH

The Radiant Way
by Margaret Drabble

(Knopf, 408 pp., $18.95)

Cuts
by Malcolm Bradbury

(Harper & Row, 143 pp., $10.95)

Margaret Drabble's long and ironic novel about the early years of Margaret Thatcher's reign reads like a fat book with a thin book inside, dying to get out. Malcolm Bradbury's short and satiric novel about the Thatcher government's maturity shows what the thin book might have looked like.

The books' origins may help account for their physiques. Drabble was at work revising *The Oxford Guide to English Literature* when Thatcher began revising just about everything else in Britain during the first half of the '80s. Not surprisingly, Drabble was thinking big by the time she surfaced from the classics in 1984. What the decade needed was a Dickens or a George Eliot—an ambitious, imaginative social portraitist. In the '70s Drabble's formerly trim, Austen-like novels about trim young women had already begun to spread and blur as she grasped after greater scope. Now the time had come to undertake the state-of-England novel, and Thatcher's conservative revolution conveniently seemed to call for a large canvas.

Bradbury's inspiration was more direct and modest. In 1985 he was busy at the BBC, working on an elaborate television dramatization of one of his novels. As filming was about to start (after trips to Turkey and other extravagances), funding was cut off: the Thatcher ax had struck close to home. But the fiasco wasn't a complete waste. When his publisher proposed that he produce a short novel in four months, Bradbury was ready. Why not try a send-up of Thatcherite austerity, at screenplay length, set in the TV industry?

Cuts is just that. But it is also, uncannily, a send-up of the long-winded anti-Thatcherite sensibility of Drabble's novel. The premise of Bradbury's book is that the best way to treat Lady Rigour's revolution is to give it a taste of its own medicine; the heartless, straitened times don't deserve—and can't inspire—a spacious, grandly ironic novel. His compact "screenplay," peopled by caricatures and propelled by a preposterous plot, is more than simply clever parody. Bradbury conveys a mood of dazed disorientation; it feels dark when his book is over. By contrast, Drabble's novel falls short of the profound social panorama it aspires to be. Its crowds of characters turn into caricatures, and its encompassing perspective and its plot strain credulity. Schematic and claustrophobic, it too often slips into parody—of itself.

Where Bradbury cuts everything (that's the reigning conceit of his book) Drabble multiplies. In the foreground she puts not one but three of her familiar protagonists, smart middle-class women from the north who graduated from Cambridge in the late '50s, then struggled gamely with men and professions in the '60s and '70s. "Amongst the *crème de la crème* of their generation," Liz Headleand, Alix Bowen, and Esther Breuer have been the beneficiaries of "the brave new world of Welfare State and County Scholarships, of equality for women; they were the elite, the chosen, the garlanded of the great social dream." When the novel opens in 1980, the three friends, all living in London and still regularly in touch, are apparently no longer feeling so elite, so chosen, so garlanded. (Drabble forever multiplies nouns, verbs, and especially adjectives, as though one word could never be sufficiently weighty.)

Drabble studiously distinguishes her middle-aged threesome. Liz "would like to make sense of things. To understand," Alix "would like to change things," Esther wishes "to acquire interesting information. That is all." Their predicaments, like their temperaments, are carefully complementary. In the novel's five-year span (1980-85), Liz, a prospering psychotherapist, weathers a divorce from her husband, Charles, a senior television executive and the novel's Conservative. She also evades and then inconclusively confronts a past up north—in "The Other Nation, less than two hundred miles away"—that she has denied for years.

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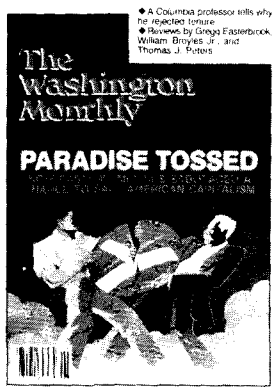

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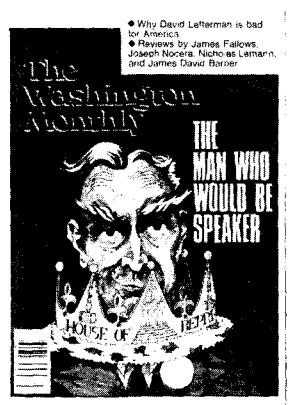

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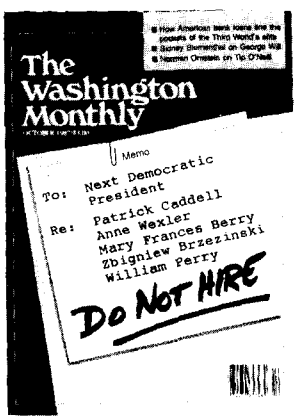

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Alix, who teaches literature to women inmates, loses her job and embarks on a future up north that she dreads. She decides to follow her husband, Brian, an adult education teacher and the novel's Labourite, to his new post, disillusioned though she is by his increasingly fervent leftism. As for Esther, an art historian who has never married, her alienation is elusive and aesthetic, like everything else about her. She's off for Italy when the novel ends.

In fact, all three of Drabble's protagonists are curiously self-absorbed and unsympathetic, trapped in minds as meandering as the novel they inhabit. They meet monthly—"They would eat, drink, and talk. They exchanged ideas."—but are disconcertingly opaque to one another, and to the reader. Their creator picks them up and drops them as she pleases; and while she's got them, the usual treatment is to tell rather than show. Or simply to ask. At a turning point in Liz's life—when her shadowy family past rises up to unsettle her—the narrator interrupts with a quiz:

> It will by now be evident that Liz Headleand is concealing something from herself, and that it is for this reason that she sits there perplexed before an empty cottage cheese carton, smoking a cigarette. It is evident to Liz Headleand herself, as well as to the reader, that she is concealing something from herself. But what is it? Does she know what it is? Do you know what it is? Do I know what it is? Does anybody know what it is?

But Drabble misses the most pertinent question, Does anybody care? When the narrator—who favors the 19th-century intrusive style—isn't treating her readers to rhetorical summaries of her heroines' lives and crises, she inundates them with details. One specialty is the slow, significant close-up; Alix spends a page (the second in the book) applying Fluid Foundation, makeup with a name that's meant to resonate. Another is the allusive scan that assumes familiarity with local landmarks—of British politics and media, of London street names and neighborhoods: Should Liz live in Harley Street, Kentish Town, or Kensington?

As if aware that her heroines' dilemmas risk becoming dull, Drabble assigns them each a threatening mystery—Liz's father haunts her; a disturbed inmate has a hold over Alix; an eccentric companion of Esther's grows increasingly strange—but these don't succeed in stirring them much below the surface. Drabble also aims to put her men in more dramatic predicaments; on either end of the political spectrum, they're supposed to be taking England's trauma more to heart. And they do: Charles and Brian, portrayed as childlike compared with their mature mates, are likably impressionable and passionate. They react to the public and private crises Drabble arranges for them, rather than merely ruminate about them. But even Charles's disillusionment with his past idealism (in the '60s he made a TV documentary, called *The Radiant Way*, in support of comprehensive education) and Brian's illusions about radical solutions are packaged into patronizing stereotypes: "Unlike Charles Headleand, Brian was a good man, and instantly recognizable as a good man."

DRABBLE'S protagonists are women who muddle in the middle, avoiding extremes—of right and left, of height and depth. That might seem to make them the ideal center for a comprehensive portrait of a tumultuous era, but in fact their perspective proves to be disappointingly provincial. What Drabble dramatizes is her version of the emerging Social Democratic sensibility. The style, as she both evokes and projects it, is portentously detached and cliquish. She and her protagonists may well be "in some kind of representative position of representative confusion," but it's a rarefied one—especially for anyone who lives outside of England, or even outside of Drabble's ex-Labourite, anti-Conservative ambience. The cluttered foreground invites insiders in search of self-portraits and is likely to daunt others; Drabble's sweeping background seems designed with aloof observers in mind.

But that is the exclusive audience of spectators whom Drabble means to address, as becomes clear in one of the novel's rhetorical panoramas. The narrator aspires to George Eliot-style gravitas and scope, updated with a self-conscious, knowing tone. Instead of empathy, the result is smugness:

> These were the years of inner-city riots, of race riots in Brixton and Toxteth, of rising unemployment and riotless gloom; these were the years of a small war in the Falklands (rather a lot of people dead), and of the Falklands Factor in politics: . . . Aeroplanes crashed from the skies. Superpowers smouldered. Soldiers in Afghani-

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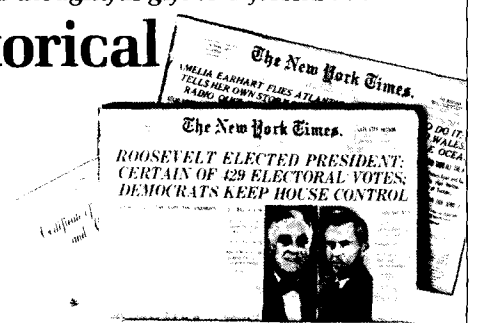
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stan killed guerrillas in Afghanistan, and guerrillas in Afghanistan killed soldiers in Afghanistan . . .

After a little more globe-trotting, the survey culminates in the creation of the Social Democratic-Liberal alliance—and of the cast and audience of this novel: "[The party] also attracted the support of a good many of the characters in, and potential readers of, this novel, who had been alienated by the New Right but perhaps even more by the New-Old Left."

Drabble has commented that "sometimes my book is more sociology than fiction, but I don't care." In fact, it isn't really sociology either. Drabble has made the laudable, rare effort to be comprehensive; she sees to it that her book includes north and south, rich and poor, country and city, public and private, young and old, men and women. But instead of bringing these categories to life, she often does little more than label them. Nor is her book more than superficially historical, even though she has ambitiously appointed herself chronicler of half a decade. Drabble's aerial surveys and frozen close-ups effectively undermine any sense of motion. The novel opens in 1980 amid apprehensive confusion and closes in 1985 amid fatalistic confusion, and it's only by resorting to an awkward plot contrivance that Drabble conveys any momentum at all.

Abandoning politics, sociology, and history entirely, she calls on hackneyed symbolism to rouse suspense and sum up her message. There are violent hints all along, alluding to the recurring exploits of the Horror of Harrow Road, who has been cutting off women's heads. He is finally discovered to be Esther's upstairs neighbor, and while the three women chatter downstairs, the police surround the house and the murderer surrenders. It's hard enough to take the severed heads seriously as an image of irrational darkness ironically counterposed to the "rational, radiant light" of the new regime. Drabble pursues the theme to the point of parody when the unremarkable murderer quietly emerges, an emblem of the banality of England's evil; it's as though he's meant to evoke reflections on the tragic normalcy of the official rash of cutting and slashing.

WHICH BRINGS us to *Cuts*. Bradbury sets out to dramatize the comic abnormality of all the ax-wielding in England in a book that reads like a mock revision of Drabble. He cuts her five years to three months, focusing on the summer of 1986, when government austerity was at its peak and the Big Bang was around the corner—when regulations limiting London's banks would be cut, to revive the City as an international financial center. He cuts back geographically as well: where Drabble shuttled between London and "Northam, that figurative northern city," he sets his story all in a "great sad northern city," where gleaming gentrification and decay are juxtaposed.

Bradbury also cuts down on protagonists, and makes them contrasting caricatures. The CEO of Eldorado Television and the lecturer in the Department of Extra-Mural Studies who star in Bradbury's plot call to mind Drabble's Charles and Brian. But Lord Mellow and Henry Babbacombe are not stereotypes striving to be rounded, they are triumphantly flat and extreme: the tyrannical TV mogul is the worldly entrepreneur and the hapless professor is the innocent dreamer. It's a tried and true pairing for the story about illusion and disillusion with reality that Bradbury, like Drabble, sees in the Thatcher revolution.

But where Drabble ironically titles her grim book after an idealistic TV documentary (and a child's primer), Bradbury takes his title straight from the cutting room floor. He presents rushes of unreality, and they turn out to be not only entertaining but revealing. His focus is on the rich and renovated, a dimension of the Thatcher revolution missing from Drabble's drama of the crumbling middle. Offering the devastating view from the inside, Bradbury captures the frenetic confusion of those who do the cutting as well as of their victims.

ELDORADO Television is housed in a tall glass building that looms over a bleak region, which "all the same . . . offered many stories of bleak human truth, set against good grainy locations." Low-budget productions have been the company's specialty, but Lord Mellow has decided in the summer of 1986 that the "moment has come to try for the peaks." It's time to produce a high-quality show that will attract all the "floating money [in London] that's begging to invest in the right-quality artistic package," as well as worldwide co-production money—a series that will end up on prime-time American TV. He knows what kind of show he doesn't want; he's just cut "Gladstone, Man of Empire," after sinking a half million into a script, and he's

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sick of all the other English staples his wildly creative staff suggests:

> "No, I do not want another big country house with a fucking fountain," said Lord Mellow. "I never again wish to see another hero mooning round a Hawksmoor façade twitching his mouth beautifully because no one's written him a single damned line to say.... I do not want any more End of Empire.... Forget about your Pinters and Potters and Platers. Find me someone new and original."

Henry Babbacombe, a "decidedly bushel-hidden light," as the head of his department calls him, is plucked from his teaching post at a provincial university in a dispiriting hill village to save the day for Eldorado. His previous literary work "falls somewhere roughly between Eco and Endo" and is best characterized, he explains, not by subject but by color; "I'm afraid I doubt the existence of an external reality," he says, and describes his latest book as yellow. Happily working all day in his shed on his Beckettian novels, Henry has no reason to know anything about reality. But now, suddenly a "great model of Thatcherite enterprise" (as his department head wryly salutes him, before firing him), he's plunged into it.

Or is it fantasy? Bradbury nimbly plays off of the convergence of Henry's and Eldorado Television's tenuous holds on reality. For although Henry is totally flummoxed by the strange project he embarks on, he also fits in. "I see it as essentially puce" is his contribution to the first script consultation he attends at Eldorado, which doesn't deter the rest of the staff in the slightest, because they'd never planned to pay him any attention anyway. The writer is only one cog in the mad machinery that goes into making "Serious Damage," as the series is to be called. Bradbury has a great time exposing the heartless, brainless havoc of script composition: while everyone is busy cutting whatever everyone else has written, locations are scouted, costumes made, actors hired, money spent. The point is that the crazy splicing and splurging in the studio conjure up the ravages in the real world. The story, in the end, really is puce.

It veers, for a while, toward a sunnier, more conventional color. In a panoramic passage that sounds remarkably like Drabble, except that here the satire sails rather than sinks, Bradbury elaborates on the relation between Eldorado's drama and Thatcher's serial:

> Manufacturing industry was declining, jobs for the young were disappearing, financial speculation was increasing, and everyone was waiting for the Big Bang. Rape and child-murder were increasing; crime-figures escalating, the centres of great cities deteriorating. Sex was lethal, smoking abhorrent, drinking dangerous, food destructive, and indeed the only pleasure left to make life worth living, if it was at all, was money, poor little paper money, which was trying to do all the work. It was a serial that Henry watched intermittently, glancing at its banal horrors, its bland tragedies, its half-apocalyptic messages, its unstructured and chaotic plots.

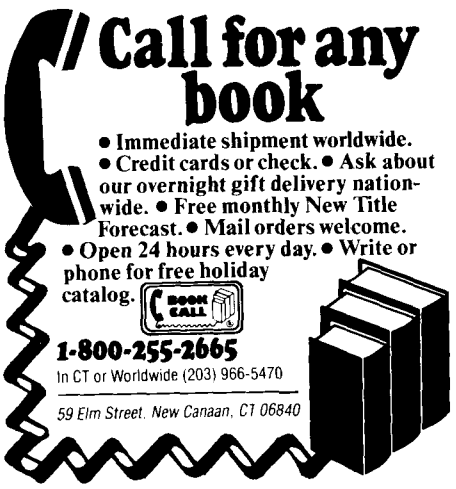
Given this backdrop, Henry understood "why people might actually want to watch a tale of reassuring characters, traditional and solid houses, established customs, sunlit lawns, sentimental feelings, flowing nostalgia, and an all too happy ending—the sort of tale that somehow, as he worked along with the team at Eldorado, 'Serious Damage' was showing every sign of becoming."

Due to last-minute cuts, however, the teamwork unravels. When one of the two stars collapses, Henry is sent to rework the script. Now "he had some deep cuts to make himself," and as he tries to write around the empty spaces, his original aspiration toward puce is realized: cold darkness intrudes. "Perhaps it didn't really need to be about anything at all, or not in the sense of about that is usually about. Lots of events happened, but they happened disconnectedly, obscurely, just as in his novels"—just as in real life. Bradbury closes the circle: Henry's arcane vision of an atomized world and the chaotic reality of an atomized world have converged in the surreal serial.

In the end, the whole series is cut, so we never know exactly how Henry has handled those banal horrors, bland tragedies, half-apocalyptic messages, and chaotic plots that have pressed in upon him. But it's quite clear that he, like his creator, would have avoided Drabble's difficulties. In striving for encompassing realism, Drabble succumbed to the radical confusion of the Thatcher decade. The prime minister shook up the country; the novelist tried to assemble the pieces on her canvas—and prose proved more unwieldy than politics. Drabble earnestly monitors the mood of the times, but she never manages seriously and fully to imagine it. The irony she counts on to mark her distance from the chaos only makes everyone's bewilderment seem inconsequential; it doesn't inspire the sympathy needed for an ample portrait of a disoriented country.

Henry skirts such dangers, airily announcing his anti-realist stance early on: "Naturally as a maker of fictions I believe the world is a fiction.... I am competing with the world, not trying vulgarly to imitate it." As literary theory, this entrepreneurial spirit of competition turns out to produce fiction that is peculiarly well-suited to the fractured age. The prime minister has exercised a free hand, slicing and splicing; so has Bradbury, seizing an opportune moment for a cutting farce.

ANN HULBERT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CARPE DIEM

A Death in November
by Ellen J. Hammer

(E. P. Dutton, 373 pp., $22.50)

As films, books, and television series on Vietnam proliferate, the focus is almost always, of course, on us: on how young Americans lived and died when thrust into a world for which they were unprepared, how our decision-makers calculated, or miscalculated, as they confronted the bewildering Indochinese quagmire. This is natural enough. The war tore our country apart too; and the poison that it injected into American politics is still with us, coloring every debate on the use of American force abroad.

But for all our absorption with the grunts on Hamburger Hill and the POWs in the Hanoi Hilton, the fact remains that the story of American involvement in Vietnam can only be understood by examining the complex, and ultimately fatal, interaction between Saigon politicians and American policy-makers. And it must begin with the days before American combat troops came to Vietnam, when the United States, with relatively little public debate and often without public announcement, slipped from an advisory role, for which we were ill-suited, into the responsibility for a war that we couldn't win.

There were many misunderstandings, many days of deception, in the long involvement of American policy-makers and Vietnamese officials. But one day stands out above all others as the turning point: November 1, 1963. On that day Ngo Dinh Diem, the president of South Vietnam, was overthrown by a group of army officers, which had explicit encouragement from the American government. Ellen J. Hammer's book is a study of that extraordinary day, and of the events that led up to it.

That day holds strong personal memories for me. It was a Friday, and I was planning to leave my post in Soc Trang, in the lower Mekong Delta, where I was a civilian provincial adviser, to spend the weekend in Saigon with some friends. I waited several hours to catch a ride with an Army C-123 that was supposed to come down from Saigon, but it never arrived, so in the late morning I set out for Saigon in my Jeep Wagoneer, normally a trip of a few hours. At the main crossing of the Mekong River at Can Tho I found troops blocking the ferry crossing. A battle? A crisis in Saigon? It wasn't clear, but there was no getting across the great river.

From a phone in the nearby USIS compound I called my friends, who lived near the presidential palace. "I'm not sure I can make it," I started to say, but my friend interrupted me. "We're all in the closet," he shouted. "There's shooting all over the place." And ever thoughtful, he held the telephone out of the closet so I could hear for myself the sound of gunfire. The day that everyone had feared, or hoped for, was at hand. Early the next morning the ferry resumed service; I drove to Saigon and found a celebrating Vietnamese citizenry planting flowers in the soldiers' gun barrels. I was 22 years old and extremely upset that I had missed the chance to see a revolution.

By the fall of 1963, at least six different groups were plotting a coup against the government of Ngo Dinh Diem. After eight years of increasingly heavy-handed rule, the reclusive Catholic leader and his family had run out of room. Diem's brothers had created narrowly based personal fiefdoms throughout the country. One was the archbishop of Hue, another the political boss of that graceful, old imperial city. Ngo Dinh Nhu, the most powerful brother, ran the government on a day-to-day basis. After the government's bloody repression in May of attempts to celebrate the Buddha's birthday with traditional parades (which included the banned Buddhist flag), the situation took a dramatic and unexpectedly rapid downturn; and in May 1963 a 73-year-old Buddhist monk, Thich Quang Duc, immolated himself at a busy intersection in downtown Saigon. It was then that Madame Nhu, Ngo Dinh Nhu's vicious and hated wife, a proto-Imelda Marcos, made her famous reference to "Buddhist barbecues."

In Washington, the Kennedy administration now began a tremendous internecine disputation about whether, after so many years of support, the time had come for the United States to abandon Diem. In late August, after a shocking midnight raid on the main Buddhist pagodas by Diem's secret police, a top secret State Department telegram was sent to the American Embassy in Saigon, where it was received by Henry Cabot Lodge, Kennedy's old political rival and the new American ambassador. This was the famous DEPTEL 243. While it never used the word "coup," the communication instructed the U.S. Embassy in Saigon to make contacts with the generals concerning a change in government. If Diem does not reform, DEPTEL 243 continued:

> then we are prepared to accept the obvious implication that we can no longer support Diem. You may also tell the appropriate military commanders we will give them direct support in any interim period of breakdown of the central government mechanism. . . . Ambassador and country team should urgently examine all possible alternative leadership and make detailed plans as to how we might bring about Diem's replacement if this should become necessary.

The authority for DEPTEL 243 remains controversial to this day. Several senior officials in the Kennedy administration have maintained that it was never properly cleared, that Kennedy approved it only because he was inaccurately informed that Dean Rusk was supporting it. Asked later what he had learned from the DEPTEL 243 incident, McGeorge Bundy is alleged to have said, "Never do business on weekends."

Still, self-protective historical revisions and repositionings notwithstanding, the telegram was undeniably sent and never clearly rescinded. And the CIA, primarily through a legendary agent named Lucien Conein, began making contacts that gave the generals a message they had been awaiting for years. Finally, although still somewhat ambivalent about its role, the United States was even a physical presence at the end; Conein was actually at coup headquarters, reporting to the American Embassy via a special telephone line. "Bring lots of money," Gen. Tran van Don had told Conein. The leader of the coup, Gen. Duong van Minh ("Big Minh"), added, "In case we fail, you're going with us."

The coup succeeded, of course, but Big Minh's macabre joke to Conein turned out to be spectacularly true: when the generals failed to save their country, they took the United States with them.

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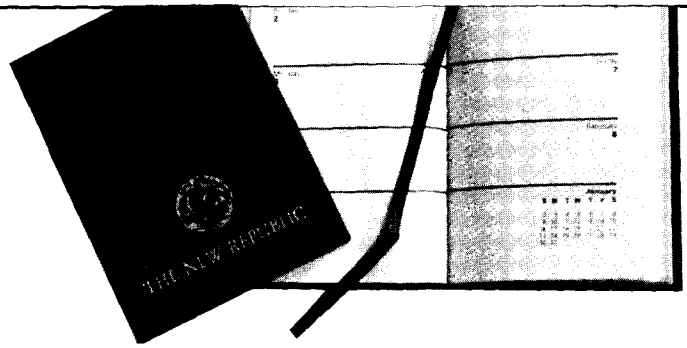
Only 90 days later, Big Minh and his fellow officers were overthrown by another general, an incompetent "clown" (in the words of South Vietnamese Ambassador Bui Diem in his fascinating new memoir *The Jaws of Victory*) named Nguyen Khanh. This coup, of which the American Embassy again had prior knowledge, and which it should have prevented, brought chaos to Saigon. Khanh himself will be remembered as the round-faced general who led Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara and Gen. Maxwell Taylor around the Vietnamese countryside on a whirlwind campaign-style tour, holding their hands aloft in his, while McNamara chanted "*Vietnam muon nam*." Unfortunately McNamara got his Vietnamese tones wrong; instead of saying "Long live Vietnam," what he actually said, to the vast amusement of his audiences, was "Vietnam wants to lie down."

THE CONSEQUENCES of the events of 1963 were beyond calculation. After November 1 the United States was drawn inexorably into every detail of Vietnamese life. Politically, we became the decisive external force whose smile or frown could determine the fate of ministers, even of governments. Economically, our aid, already huge, grew to incredible proportions. And as Saigon's military forces deteriorated, as the Communists pressed forward with renewed vigor to take advantage of the capital's confusion, we were left with a grim choice: either "Americanize" the war effort or walk away from it and leave Indochina to the Communists. In the end, of course, we first chose the former; and then, as the costs of that policy became intolerable, the latter. It added up to the worst of all possible policies and the worst of all possible outcomes.

It would be gratifying to report that Hammer has produced a book worthy of this fateful and catastrophic event, a companion to her early classic, *The Struggle for Indochina*. But such is not the case. *A Death in November* sheds no significant new light on the events of 1963. Its only original sources seem to be second-level Vietnamese and foreign officials. Hammer is content to recycle secondary sources and add a few personal anecdotes. Although many of the participants in these events are still alive, Hammer apparently has failed to interview them; for example, she does not even mention, let alone interview, men such as Michael Dunn, then Lodge's special



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assistant, or Frederick W. Flott, who transcribed the last conversation between Diem and Lodge. Nor, apparently, did she interview any of the numerous Washington officials or American journalists to whom she refers.

Yet the story of November 1, 1963, is so important to an understanding of the Vietnam War that, until a better book comes along, Hammer's book will have to do. And the general reader will certainly learn from it. Our involvement in Vietnam was not some kind of strange accident; 550,000 Americans were not dropped into Southeast Asia by some sort of cosmic pilot error. Hammer does remind us of how we got into the war; and she reminds us too what a blunt instrument American power tends to be, and how difficult it is to use subtly, for example, for the advocacy of reform.

WAS THE American government responsible for Diem's overthrow and murder? On this controversial point, debated for over 20 years, two things must be said. First, Diem lost his legitimacy when he alienated the Buddhist activists; his regime doomed itself with its own repressive policies, especially after the August attack on the pagodas. It was Diem, and nobody else, who planted the seeds of his downfall. In the final analysis, the United States did not overthrow Diem, nor could it have saved him.

Still, American involvement in the coup was critical, just as it would be in Manila in 1986. It shaped the timing and the nature of the event, and the expectations that followed Diem's downfall; and it changed forever the American role in Vietnam. A coup was inevitable, then, but the precise way in which it occurred, with American encouragement and Conein at GHQ, meant that history would hold the United States accountable in one way or another, even for things beyond Washington's control. Washington, in short, had found the worst possible level of involvement—deep enough to be held responsible, not skillful enough to find a government that could be effective in the war against the Viet Cong.

During the period preceding the coup, there were no serious discussions among American policy-makers about the nature of a post-Diem government, or about what Washington thought would be required to win the war. Nor did the American government seek to save the lives of the Ngo brothers. The official embassy record of Lodge's final conversation with Diem, calling from hiding, makes chilling reading today:

> DIEM: Some units have made a rebellion and I want to know: What is the attitude of the United States?
> LODGE: I do not feel well enough informed to be able to tell you. I have heard the shooting but am not acquainted with all the facts. Also, it is 4:30 a.m. in Washington . . .
> DIEM: But you must have some general ideas. After all, I am a chief of state. I have tried to do my duty . . .
> LODGE: You have certainly done your duty. As I told you only this morning, I admire your courage and your great contributions to your country. . . . Now I am worried about your physical safety. I have a report that those in charge of the current activity offer you and your brother safe conduct out of the country if you resign. Had you heard this?
> DIEM: No (*after a pause*). You have my telephone number.
> LODGE: Yes. If I can do anything for your physical safety, please call me.
> DIEM: I am trying to re-establish order.

The two men never talked again. Diem and Nhu surrendered and were shot as they were being driven to military headquarters, apparently on orders from the coup leaders.

LATER Richard Nixon became convinced that John Kennedy had ordered Diem killed, and he assigned none other than E. Howard Hunt to find, or perhaps to fabricate, evidence linking the president to the murders. But there is no evidence whatsoever that Americans participated in the decisions that led to the assassination of the Ngo brothers. What does seem clear, however, is that the United States did not do enough to ensure their survival. There was some feeling in Saigon—I remember it well—that if Diem survived a coup, he would cause dissension and intrigue later, as Marcos, for example, has done since he arrived in Honolulu. But even if there was such a danger—and I think the fear was greatly overstated—the United States still should have tried to protect the Ngo brothers' physical safety, as it did, correctly, with Marcos in 1986. The ugly and failing character of Diem's regime notwithstanding, simple decency, and a proper respect for historical relationships, required a serious effort to save them; and none was made.

The lessons of November 1, 1963, for American foreign policy have been as bitterly disputed as the war itself. There are those, including Nixon and Lyndon Johnson, who apparently believed that if we had stuck with Diem we could have won the war. There is nothing to substantiate such a view; like the war itself, Diem was not salvageable, even with American help. Indeed, a respectable case can be made that the United States should have abandoned Diem years earlier, when it was clear that he would never take the measures for reform that were necessary to build a popularly based anti-Communist government, measures that Washington had repeatedly and unsuccessfully urged on him. (It is Bui Diem's contention in *The Jaws of Victory* that America's greatest mistake was supporting Diem in 1955.)

IN THE 24 years since November 1, responsible policy-makers—those who understood the complicated legacy of that day—should have learned to ask themselves more searching questions about what kind of regime might follow the incumbents; about the real extent of American influence, and of its ability to control events; about the personal fate of fallen leaders with long-standing ties to the United States; above all, about the real interests of the United States in a particular country or region.

Unfortunately, neoconservatives have derived a predictably wrong lesson from Saigon, reinforced later in Nicaragua and Iran: better to support the anti-Communist authoritarian you know, no matter how narrow his base of support, rather than risk a drift toward the left as a result of pressure for reform and democracy. Thus they oppose the Reagan administration's efforts, however tentative, in such places as the Philippines, Korea, and Chile. But Jeane Kirkpatrick and others misread the tragedy in Saigon, as well as the ouster of Somoza in Nicaragua. Those regimes, as well as Marcos's, were doomed. American policy has to proceed from an understanding of the underlying situation in these countries in order for us to be among the beneficiaries of inevitable change, rather than one of its victims. The alternative to the authoritarianism so attractive to neoconservatives is less and less likely to be communism. For communism, as an ideology, has become intellectually and morally bankrupt, rejected by almost every region and nation in the Third World that has had a choice.

Only two routes to power are still open to communists: the use of external force, as in the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan or Vietnam's ouster of the Khmer Rouge; or the step-by-step, op-

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portunistic creation of a movement in which the Marxist element is publicly minimized, battening on a common opposition to a repressive or corrupt regime. It was the latter condition that gave a Marxist-dominated Sandinista opposition the chance to take over Nicaragua from Somoza. The Philippines under Marcos raised a similar risk; senior administration officials predicted in 1985 that if he remained in power, the Communist guerrilla movement could well succeed within a few years. American support for the development of more broadly based and popularly supported governments is not only correct morally, it is an essential ingredient in an effective American foreign policy, a necessary condition for the prevention of the growth of Marxist-controlled movements clothed in reformist rhetoric. *That* is the most important lesson of that Friday in November.

RICHARD HOLBROOKE

Richard Holbrooke, assistant secretary for East Asian and Pacific affairs during the Carter administration, is a managing director at Shearson Lehman Brothers.

PRAYING AND PLAYING

The Collected Plays and Writings on Theater by Karol Wojtyla translated by Boleslaw Taborski

(University of California Press, 395 pp., $35)

Two of the world's most powerful men were once actors. But only one of them was also smart enough to write his own lines. The appearance in English of *The Collected Plays and Writings on Theater* reminds us that before he became John Paul II, Karol Wojtyla's extraecclesiastic pastimes included not only philosophy, poetry, acting, skiing, and hiking, but also playwriting. To paraphrase Stalin, how many diversions does the pope have?

To be exact, Wojtyla stopped writing plays years before he moved to Rome. Between 1940 and 1964 he wrote six plays altogether, of which five have survived. Of these, three were written after he had become a priest. Only one, *The Jeweler's Shop*, was published (under a pseudonym) before his election to the papacy. Naturally all five were eagerly unearthed by the Polish Catholic publishing house Znak in the wake of the rejoicing in 1978, and were included in a volume of Wojtyla's collected poems and plays published in 1980. The poems have been available in English translation for several years; the present edition collects the plays and six brief essays on theater, all translated, annotated, and introduced with extreme care by John Paul's appointed English translator, the London-based poet and critic Boleslaw Taborski.

Though Wojtyla was virtually unknown as a playwright before 1980, dramaturgy was for him a more essential expression than poetry. As an eight-year-old he was involved with an amateur theater in his hometown of Wadowice; as a teenager he acted in some ten plays staged by his high school theater. After moving to Krakow and entering the university in 1938 (he majored in Polish literature), Wojtyla continued to perform with a semiprofessional theater group.

The outbreak of the war did not dissuade him from his literary and theatrical pursuits, even though the Nazi occupation forced Polish cultural activity underground. Working by day in a quarry and in a chemical factory, by night Wojtyla continued to study at the university, now clandestine, and to write poetry. In December 1939 he wrote his first play (eventually lost), *David*; in 1940 *Job* and *Jeremiah* followed. In these first years of the occupation he was also involved with an underground group of young actors, who staged plays in private apartments. These efforts were institutionalized, though still covert, after August 1941, when Wojtyla and his older friend Mieczyslaw Kotlarczyk founded the Rhapsodic Theater in Krakow.

The Rhapsodic Theater was not just another clandestine form of keeping Polish culture alive. It was an artistic experiment aimed at creating a special "theater of the word," in which scarcity of visual theatrical effect (a natural scarcity, under the circumstances) was part of a deliberate aesthetic. The performances were based on recitation rather than acting, and the repertory consisted of poems rather than plays. As Kotlarczyk put it, it was an attempt "to revolutionize theater through the *word*."

Wojtyla took part in all 22 wartime performances of the Rhapsodic Theater. After 1946, when he was ordained a priest, his ties with the Theater became looser, of course, but they were never completely severed. On the contrary, he supported and defended the Theater throughout its postwar existence, which was particularly difficult during the years of Stalinism, until its final closure by the Gomulka regime in 1967.

The idea of a "rhapsodic theater," or "theater of the word," clearly informs Wojtyla's three later plays, *Our God's Brother* (1945-50), *The Jeweler's Shop* (1960), and *Radiation of Fatherhood* (1964). Compared with these works, his beginnings as a dramatist seem decidedly conventional. *Job* and *Jeremiah*, both written when he was 20, expose the workings of the young author's mind and show his familiarity with the Bible, and with the Polish Romantic and Neo-Romantic traditions, but they are not artistic feats in themselves. *Job* reflects on the problems of evil, suffering, and punishment, viewing Job's fate as a prefiguration of Christ's passion, and of mankind's martyrdom during the Second World War. *Jeremiah* fuses biblical allusion with a segment of Poland's turbulent history in the early 17th century, thus creating a messianic vision of the nation's downfall and resurrection. *Job* is structured like a Greek tragedy, while *Jeremiah* is closer to Symbolist theater.

It is in their style, however, that both these plays are most marked by the future pope's attachment to a particular tradition, the choice of which was not exactly, well, infallible. Both plays, especially in the original, appear heavily influenced by the worst of the work of Stanislaw Wyspianski, the greatest Polish Symbolist playwright, namely his artificially elevated and pseudo-archaic language. These stylistic qualities are greatly toned down in Taborski's sensitive translation, but stiltedness remains. *Job* and *Jeremiah* were written by a 20-year-old sophomore, and in the Polish edition of Wojtyla's work

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both plays were listed as juvenilia.

The reader who opens this book in order to see the future pope's mind at work might well begin by reading Wojtyla's next play, *Our God's Brother*. As Taborski notes in his introduction, this play is unique if only because it doesn't happen very often that a playwright has the chance to beatify his play's protagonist. Wojtyla's lifelong fascination with the figure of the legendary Brother Albert (Adam Chmielowski, 1845-1916), a painter and political insurrectionist, protector of the homeless and founder of the order of Albertines, resulted first in his writing a play about him. More than 30 years later, his hero was finally beatified by the Church, and it was John Paul II who announced the event to one million people who came to hear him in Krakow during his second papal visit to Poland.

Our God's Brother opens the main chapter in Wojtyla's dramaturgy; it breaks with the conventions of Symbolist theater and offers a more innovative approach. The principles of "theater of the word" are already put into effect. The dramatic action and the stage movement are reduced to a minimum; the characters serve mainly as exponents of different ethical attitudes, presented in extensive philosophical exchanges. At the same time it is an example of what Kotlarczyk and Wojtyla called "inner theater." As an attempt to "penetrate the man" rather than simply to illustrate the course of his life, the action takes place in the inner space of the protagonist's mind. The dramatic scenes (if that is what they are) occur as if they belonged to external reality, but in fact they are reminiscences played out on the stage of the hero's thoughts.

Wojtyla made a further step in this direction in his two plays written in the early 1960s, *The Jeweler's Shop* and *Radiation of Fatherhood*. These two plays mark a decisive shift toward the mystery play. Their protagonists are modern Everymen of both sexes, who meditate on the problem of their entanglement in the web of relationships with God and other humans, and ponder the fundamental mysteries of love, marriage, and parenthood. This is indeed a theater of the word, or an even more ascetic theater of ideas, one that tries to prove, as Wojtyla put it in one of his essays on theater, that "not only events but also problems are dramatic."

Thus it is mainly the problem that "acts" here, while the actor serves mainly to "carry the problem." The dramatic action is minimized even more than before; each play is actually composed of long monologues, which, though interrelated by their content, are monologues nonetheless. Taborski notes properly that these are not monologues of the Harold Pinter variety, where the isolation of utterances serves to stress the characters' inability to communicate. Rather, these are monologues merely because meditation can be done only in solitude. On another plane, though, these separate meditations form a universal dialogue that permeates the human and divine world, "a conversation of prayers," as Dylan Thomas put it.

From a purely literary standpoint, Wojtyla's plays may provoke different reactions. Certainly not everybody needs this much seriousness and solemnity in art. But they should be required reading, along with his poems and philosophical writings, for anyone who wishes to understand the man, certainly for anybody who wishes to pass judgment on him. I don't mean that the plays clarify John Paul's specific ideas. (Although they do that too: *Our God's Brother*, for instance, contains a revealing discussion of the problem of social injustice and revolution, which corresponds intriguingly with the pope's pronouncements in Latin America 30-odd years later.) I mean that they illuminate the character of this pope—particularly his open-mindedness, so seldom comprehended by those who are unwilling to see behind the rigid facade of the institution he represents.

Open-minded? The pope? I won't be surprised if I hear a roar of protest. The recent papal visit to this country, and its largely moronic coverage by the media, left behind two images of John Paul: a Great Communicator and a great guy, or a reactionary bogeyman who denies the benefits of progress to women and gays. Between the lawn sprinkler in the shape of the pope marketed by some fast-thinking entrepreneur (Let Us Spray, it was called) and the practice target of the left there is really not much difference: both are made of plastic.

Behind those flat images an infinitely more complex personality waits to be discovered. What we usually see is John Paul the former actor. We should also see John Paul the former playwright—someone for whom theater means not so much showmanship as dialogue. The mind of a man for whom the theater has been a primary means of expression can hardly be dogmatic. Even when he has shifted from plays to encyclicals, his outlook is still imbued with his recognition of the world's dramatic plurality. The playwright's natural element, after all, is dialogue, the confusion and conversation of our prayers.

STANISLAW BARANCZAK

Stanislaw Baranczak is the Alfred Jurzykowski Professor of Polish Language and Literature at Harvard University. His latest book is *A Fugitive from Utopia: The Poetry of Zbigniew Herbert* (Harvard University Press).

CIRCE REVISITED

She arranges starflowers in a black vase
and sets the table for three.
The silverware is embossed with falcons.
Icy violins are playing on the phonograph.

I'm leafing through a guidebook to
the planetarium in Milan, where I first met her;
it says there may be diamonds
the size of boulders in Saturn's rings.

Her cats stare at me from the couch
as she removes her teardrop earrings,
slips them into a glass of champagne
and raises it high, so the diamonds

catch the flames from the fireplace.
"The last time I saw you," she smiles,
"I dreamt we were in a forest,
embracing at the bottom of a cold lake."

Unzipping her dress, she lets her hair
down and slips off her shoes.
Her feet glow like marble.
Snow is blowing against the window.

In the shadows I feel as if we're underwater
and I'm trying to swim away from her.
She tinkles the earrings in her glass
and beckons me closer.
"Hurry, before he gets home . . .
and don't ever try to leave me again."

NICHOLAS CHRISTOPHER

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CORRESPONDENCE, *from page 4*

constructive insight into the 1960s, or anything else. While O'Rourke describes the "men" as being "exceedingly wide-eyed," and admits that he "believed stones had souls," the offensive term "airhead" is limited to the description of his girlfriend. And note that a *woman* with a two-year-old son should not be considered a "girl." The only conclusion I reached from O'Rourke's essay was that his '60s knee-jerk liberalism lacked sincerity and intellectual substance. And his essay illustrates that he has not grown any more sensitive to the issues of the day. O'Rourke admits that he wasn't ready to be civilized in 1969 but doesn't seem to recognize how far he has yet to go in '87.

SUSAN L. ALDINE
Somerville, Massachusetts

MORAL DRUGS

To the editors:

Robert Bazell's complacent view of FDA regulation misses the mark ("Dying for Drugs," November 9). Genentech's profits from TPA are a red herring: what are at issue are human lives—as many as 40,000 lives per year might be saved by TPA, streptokinase, and other clot-dissolving drugs. At this rate, the cost of FDA bureaucracy becomes substantial. In fact, repeated cost-benefit analyses have concluded that delays of FDA approval cost far more lives than they save. And it does not "lack logic" to assume that patients should have a legal right to try possibly useful unproven drugs. These drugs could be made available with appropriate warnings to ensure informed consent even while further studies were being conducted. A well-designed warning system could virtually eliminate the chances of another thalidomide. What lacks logic, as well as morality, is the present FDA approval system, by which patients with otherwise incurable conditions are denied legal access to potentially valuable therapy.

DALE GIERINGER
Oakland, California

The editors welcome correspondence from readers. Letters should include the writer's full name, address, and telephone number; be typed double-spaced; and be held to under 200 words. Letters may be edited for space. Please address letters to: Correspondence, TNR, 1220 19th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

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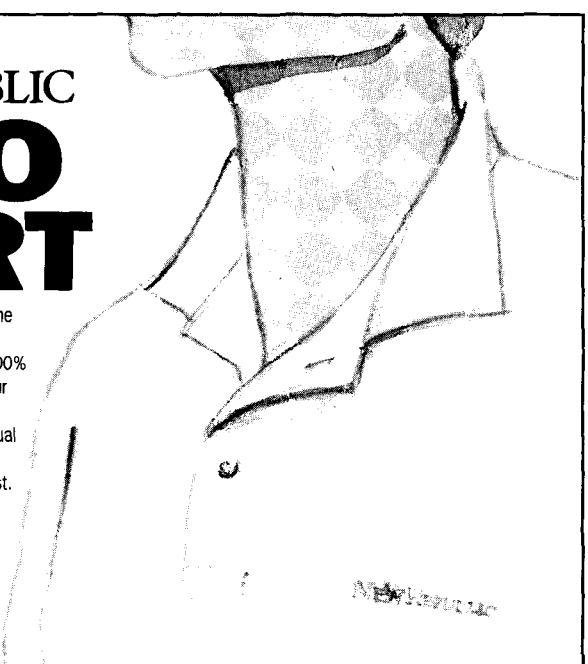

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WASHINGTON DIARIST

Wait for the Beep

EXTRAVAGANCES THAT turn quickly into necessities are common enough: VCRs, remote control TVs, automatic locks on car doors, home computers. Now I've discovered an unpleasant twist on this phenomenon. It is the luxury that's so much a necessity its absence is a burden on your friends and associates. I'm talking about recording devices on telephones that let callers leave a message when you're not home (or you're in a foul mood and don't want to come to the phone). I don't have one on my phone. Nor do I have "call waiting," which beeps while you're on the line to let you know someone else is calling. Both of these operate on the principle that you should never be completely out of touch, with anyone. But what's wrong with being out of touch? I like it. And I don't want to return home only to listen to a series of recorded messages. Whose phone calls are so important that they shouldn't go unanswered or unrecorded from time to time? Not mine. Besides, there are some people I'd just as soon duck. What about the imposition this puts on friends and colleagues? They'll have to call back, perhaps repeatedly. Worse, they may never get through at all. My, my, just think of it: a call that didn't get through, a message unreceived.

NOBODY CALLS HIM A press basher, but Tom Wolfe is awfully good at skewering reporters. In *The Right Stuff*, he likened the media mob in Washington to "the consummate Victorian gent. Sentiments that one scarcely gives a second thought to in one's private life are nevertheless insisted upon in all public utterances." Though his book about astronauts was set in the 1960s, he wrote that "this grave gent lives on in excellent health" in the 1980s. Sure does, as Douglas Ginsburg can attest. Reporters I know don't think there's anything wrong with pot smoking in your past, even in your 30s. But when Ginsburg admitted as much, the press responded with a tut-tut and acted as if a great public offense had been committed. In *The Bonfire of the Vanities*, his new novel about America in the fast lane, Wolfe zings both British journalists who cover this country and the New York press corps. The hero—I use the word loosely—is a Brit who's a drunk, a sponge, a loafer, and an ingrate, and also an incredibly shoddy reporter with a superiority complex. The other hero, an investment banker in trouble, is dogged by a roving pack of reporters, photographers, and TV crews. A minor character scoffs at reporters who fret over whether they're too aggressive and heartless, "as if the press were a rapacious beast, a tiger. I think they'd like to be thought of as bloodthirsty. That's what I call praise by faint damnation. They've got the wrong animal. In fact, they're the fruit flies. Once they get the scent, they hover, they swarm. If you swing your hand at them, they don't bite it, they dart for cover, and as soon as your head is turned, they're back again. They're fruit flies." And they aren't just in New York. They're in every big city now, as the distinction between the American press and paparazzi gradually disappears.

SPEAKING OF THE PRESS, it continues to give the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings law short shrift. And because it does, so does nearly everyone in the political and financial communities. This is bad. GRH is a wonderful piece of legislation. Not only does it work, it recognizes exactly what the problem is, namely that politicians are too weak, too afraid of leading where the people may not want to go, that they can't control their urge to spend tax (and borrowed) dollars. They're terrified of being blamed by some undeserving constituency that loses a buck or two. GRH spares them by making cuts automatic. So why was it better for the White House and Congress to hold a budget summit and work out a deficit reduction plan that averts automatic GRH cuts? It wasn't. The plan merely proves why GRH is needed. It is filled with gimmicks, like allowing cut-rate repayment of government loans now instead of paying them back in full later. This may shrink the deficit now, but it enlarges the deficit later. The plan also counts money allegedly gained from stricter IRS enforcement. If it's so easy to get this money, why isn't the IRS getting it already? The point is that much of the money gained in the plan is illusory. Some, or all, of the specific cuts outlined may never be implemented. And real cuts, such as slashing Social Security benefits or military retirement pay or eliminating a wasteful agency such as the Small Business Administration weren't included. With GRH, the cuts are hard and real. If the White House and Congress wanted to signal that they're truly prepared to tackle the deficit, all they had to do was let the GRH meat ax hack away. Instead, the signal they sent was tentative, weak, and oh so-cowardly.

THE OTHER DAY I heard a partisan of George Bush explain that even if the veep did poorly next year in the Iowa caucuses and New Hampshire primary, he'd recover on Super Tuesday in the South and still win the Republican presidential nomination. This comment showed a quite common and quite erroneous understanding of the way the system works. There are four things to remember. One, the process is dynamic. How you do in the early contests affects how you do in the later ones. If you don't do reasonably well in Iowa chances are you won't do well later. True, there are rare exceptions, and Al Gore's bid for the Democratic nomination is based on the hope that he can be one. But ordinarily, a candidate who does poorly early on is dead. That leads to the second thing to remember. The press plays a big role. It will build up whoever does well in the early events and dump on whoever doesn't. And if a candidate is being treated like a hopeless loser and dud by the press, his chances of recovering from early reverses are practically nil. Ask John Glenn if you don't believe me. The third thing is that primary polls are meaningless at this stage, since most voters haven't decided. Bush strategists boast of the huge lead he has in polls in Super Tuesday states. The South, they argue, is Bush's Maginot Line. But all this support is wafer-thin and will vanish if Bush loses Iowa and New Hampshire badly. Finally, number four is that candidates often change. Some get better with practice. Compare Al Gore now with Gore a few months ago. He's gotten much better. The point is a candidate who looks unimpressive today may seem scintillating a month from now. It's happened before. Who knows? By January 1, Bruce Babbitt may come across as the new FDR.

F. B

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"Contrary to Judge Bork, Americans do have a right to privacy—a right that extends beyond their bedrooms. And nowhere is that right more abused and disregarded than in America's workplaces.

More than two million American workers are subjected to the gross indignity of being strapped into so-called "lie detector" machines, hooked up to tubes, electrodes, and inflatable cuffs, and asked personal, impertinent, and self-incriminating questions, often unrelated to work.

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Beyond the coercive invasion of privacy, there is another problem with polygraph machines. They simply don't work. Study after study have proven that "lie detectors" detect stress, not lies, and what could be more stressful to a worker than being attached to a machine and asked questions that could lead to being fired or denied work?

That's why the United Food & Commercial Workers Union is leading the fight to get Congress to ban polygraph testing in private employment. Like the dunking stool, they have no place in America.

Workers do not abdicate their right to privacy when they go to work, as some employers would claim. Yet workers' telephone calls are secretly monitored, work production is secretly monitored by computers, physical searches are conducted and bodily fluids tested without rhyme, reason, or cause.

The battle to safeguard the right to privacy didn't stop when Judge Bork wasn't confirmed. It goes on every day in America's workplaces, and the UFCW is proud to be on the front lines."

William H. Wynn
International President

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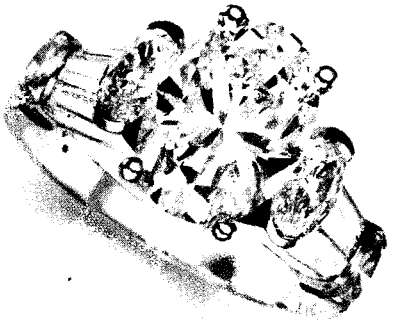

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